Ringing With Voices: 'Guided Participation' During The Literacy Hour

Thesis

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Abstract

The thesis is concerned with the social processes of learning and how these are facilitated or inhibited during the Literacy Hour. This involved looking at the provision for speaking and listening during the Literacy Hour and the arrangements made for children's 'active' participation. It also entailed looking at the working relationships in the classroom and at the way that the teacher and pupils were positioned as speakers and listeners during this time.

The central concern was to identify those conditions which would release the social and 'active' learning processes.

The main aims of the study were:

1. To raise questions about work related speaking and listening during the Literacy Hour and to assess whether it facilitates or inhibits peer interactive learning.
2. To discover whether children work collaboratively during the unsupervised time.
3. To trial an initiative for peers working collaboratively during the unsupervised time of the Literacy Hour in an attempt to increase the children's participation as speakers and listeners.

The observations took place over two years following a cohort of children from Year 1 into Year 2. Transcripts were made of 'whole' class sessions in an attempt to discover how teacher/pupil dialogue facilitated or restricted peer collaborative practices. Further transcripts were made of the 'unsupervised' time where pupils were observed working in groups but not working collaboratively. This led to the researcher implementing an initiative where pupils were 'guided' to talk and work together. These interactions were transcribed as were the final observations of those groups who had received training and were then left to work 'unsupervised'.

The approach adopted by this study had to do justice to the developing dynamics of a socio-cultural theory of teaching and learning. Therefore, there was a need to employ multiple, interrelated levels of

analysis which borrowed from anthropological evaluation, action research, discourse analysis and grounded theory. Interactions were video taped and an analysis applied to the discourse observed. Particular focus was placed on specific features of the interactive context.

The results of the research were that the constraints of a narrowly conceived nationally prescribed pedagogical approach to literacy as well as the drive for formal assessment limited the roles, time and organization of speaking and listening opportunities during the Literacy Hour. Significantly, children were unable to work collaboratively when they were unsupervised as peer interactive speaking and listening practices during the Literacy Hour were marginalized. This led to further research and the launching of an initiative to create a space for peer interactive learning. The intervention focused on the *process* of collaborative learning and measured success by the children's increased involvement, engagement and communication with each other; their growing awareness of their autonomy and the choices available to them and the group; their aptitude at asking questions, seeking explanations, making suggestions and arriving at evaluations as well as their growing awareness of themselves and others their responsibility to ensure contributions from each other.

Chapter 1.

The Literature Review.

Introduction.

This review will encompass traditional and contemporary theories of mind, which span across a number of discipline traditions: psychology, sociology, philosophy and linguistics. Chapters 1 and 2 attend to the wider context of the thesis, and give consideration to how the study is positioned in relation to policies at a national level as well as in relation to socio cultural theory and collaborative learning research in particular. This chapter will outline the National Literacy Strategy and the Literacy Hour and include a short review and critique of their theoretical/empirical basis. There will be a review and critique of socio cultural theory accompanied by a statement of the main thesis resulting from the application of socio-cultural theory to the N.L.S. Literacy Hour framework. Chapter 2 will then follow with a review of the literature on teaching and learning in primary classrooms, with particular attention to peer learning research, socio-cultural research and collaborative learning studies which have informed and supported the main argument and research questions of this thesis.

The main argument is that interactions (and peer interactions in particular) need to be understood with specific reference to the broader social, institutional, cultural and historical context within which they are positioned. This chapter will argue that there are serious omissions at a theoretical and empirical level in the ideas put forward on the teaching framework underpinning the N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour. Five years after its implementation it is time now to subject the N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour to a process of critical reflection and to assess whether it has affected Literacy teaching and learning in the English Primary classroom in unanticipated ways.

This thesis will inform a very specific part of this process of critical reflection by studying whether the NLS addresses the social processes of learning and subsequent needs of pupils.

The National Literacy Strategy and the Literacy Hour.

It is important to discuss the National Literacy Strategy and the Literacy Hour in order to appreciate how this context facilitates or restrains the social processes of learning. The present New Labour Government strived to improve standards in schools and set the target for literacy in 2002 at 80% of 11

year olds achieving level 4 which relates to criteria outlined in the National Curriculum. This drive for standards has resulted in the imposition of a highly prescriptive and detailed literacy curriculum, affecting both pedagogic structure and skills development.

The National Literacy Strategy (N.L.S.) came into effect in August 1997 (Beard, 1998). Associated with the N.L.S. was a framework of Teaching Objectives, which gave guidance on the Literacy Hour. The scheme was presented as transforming primary teaching, moving away from individualised programs of reading and writing and moving towards the direct teaching of whole class sessions and small groups. The Literacy Hour is organised in such a way as to optimise the teacher's contact with the children. It is divided into four sections: two fifteen minute whole class sessions involving text and word level work; a twenty-minute 'guided' session also dependent on oral exchange between teacher and children or an unsupervised time when children work alone and a ten minute plenary conducted as a whole class for reviewing, reflecting and consolidating the ideas from the day's session.

The National Literacy Framework for Teaching (DfEE, 1998a) encompasses aspects of a socio-cultural view of teaching and learning and defends the importance of social interaction which is mediated through talk:

> "Literacy unites the important skills of reading and writing. It also involves speaking and listening which although they are not separately identified in the framework is an essential part of it. Good oral work enhances pupils' understanding of language in both oral and written forms and of the way language can be used to communicate."
> (DfEE 1998, page 3).

Oral work has to be direct, highly interactive and instructive:

> "The objectives in the Framework should give literacy teaching focus and direction, which should aim for *high levels of motivation and active engagement for pupil.*"
> (DfEE, page 8, emphasis mine).

The previous comment on the active engagement of pupils resonates strongly with socio-cultural theory. The framework also lists certain features of "effective tuition' which are believed to facilitate this

active engagement and the interactive processes of teaching and learning during the whole class and 'guided' sessions:

> "modeling: showing learners examples of work produced by experts;
>
> demonstration: illustrating the procedures experts go through to produce work;
>
> scaffolding: supporting learners as they learn and practise procedures."

Most of these strategies are consistent with a socio-cultural approach to teaching and learning which perceive children as taking part in activities and advancing their understanding and skill through participation with others.

To continue with this idea, the N.L.S. and Literacy Hour are both informed by a substantial number of international research studies, which attest the value of 'guided' and teacher directed interaction in the classroom. In brief, the value of direct teaching of texts during the first 15 minutes of the Literacy Hour has been demonstrated by shared reading research in New Zealand, (Holdaway, 1979, 1982 and Slavin, 1996). Writing during the whole class and 'guided' sessions has been informed by research from Australia (Derewianka, 1990; Callaghan & Rothery, 1998; Martin, 1989; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993) and from the US (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Hillocks, 1986, 1995). Phonics work during the second part of the Literacy Hour reflects research from the US, (Adams, 1990) and 'Oxford' research into phonics, (Goswami & Bryant, 1990). The third part of the Literacy Hour which involves differentiated group work and 'guided' work is informed by the studies of Scheerens, (1992); Creemers, (1994); and Fountas & Pinnell, (1996). However there is a gap in the literature on the value of 'guided' oracy sessions or the value of promoting the social and cultural processes of teaching and learning.

The N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour appear sympathetic to socio-cultural ideas about the nature of teaching and learning but they fail to embrace the social and cultural significance of this theory. In common with socio-cultural theorists, the N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour both seek to reinstate the teacher at the heart of the teaching and learning process. The whole class session promotes the notion of the 'zone of proximal development' and positions the teacher as the expert 'guiding' children towards a

level of attainment not achievable to them working on their own. The N.L.S. celebrates the benefits of the 'less' able 'participating' in the interactions beyond their developmental level.

> "Careful management of demands and responses in whole class and group sessions offer *high levels of involvement for all pupils*, particularly the least able, many of whom quickly gain confidence."
> (DfEE, 1998, page 10, emphasis mine).

In theory it is also envisaged that there is a movement from a dependence on the adult (shared work), to interdependence ('guided') and finally, to independent working (unsupervised). However, the thesis will argue that expecting independent, individual work during the unsupervised time is problematic. Pupils are presented as being able to assimilate the 'lesson' but as the next section will illustrate this is rarely the case.

A Critique of the Literacy Hour and the N.L.S.

The above section illustrates that the NLS has presented the teaching profession with a new pedagogy informed by research studies. This pedagogical approach has revolutionized teaching in primary schools as evaluation data from the Literacy Project (Sainsbury, Schagen & Whetton, 1998) and national results from the annual Standard Assessment Tests of 11 year olds (DfEE, 1999) indicate that the initiative to change the teaching and learning of Literacy in schools has brought about an increase in attainment. However, there are a number of theoretical issues meriting concern.

Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development' (which describes how learning is guided or coordinated by an adult so that with the assistance of an expert, children achieve more than they could on their own) was applied to sustained dyadic interaction between teachers and learners in experimental settings (1978) rather than in a naturalistic one where a teacher is working with thirty children.

The concept of 'z.p.d.' needs to be rigorously tested before it can be applied to interactions in large classrooms. There are other researchers who have tried to extend the concept of 'z.p.d.' beyond the premises of the dyadic exchanges and towards the 'collective' 'z.p.d.' in classrooms e.g. (Moll &

Whitmore, 1993). Moll and Whitmore conducted a two year case study of the development of language and literacy skills in a class of 8-9 year old bilingual Mexican children. They describe how the teacher facilitated the bilingual children by providing authentic social contexts for them to explore the diverse purposes of their language experiences. Moll and Whitmore felt that these practices captured some of the key elements of Vygotskian theory and the 'zone of proximal development'. For Moll and Whitmore, 'z.p.d.' is not just a characteristic of individual children but a zone where children can engage in collaborative activity and can construct shared meanings, understandings and knowledge. This study has implications for this thesis as it will be interesting to observe whether the Literacy Hour and the N.L.S. have created a space for the construction of shared, common knowledge.

The N.L.S is based on research outside the UK and predates the introduction of the Literacy Hour. This is problematic from a socio-cultural perspective, as it seems appropriate to question what would happen when international research is applied to teaching and learning in the UK classroom and in the format of a Literacy lesson in particular. There is an urgent need to evaluate the impact that this culture change has on the way that children are taught literacy and especially whether speaking and listening are nurtured in the way anticipated by the Framework documentation and a way that is consistent with its Vygotskian orientation to the joint construction of knowledge with more knowledgeable others.

Furthermore, research (which will be discussed in more detail later) has also shown that the type of teacher-led discussions recommended in the N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour can often limit children's contributions and fail to invite the child to contribute what they already know. In addition, the theoretical statements in the N.L.S. do not suggest how to translate these strategies to contemporary classroom practice. One of the biggest omissions in the N.L.S is a clear rationale for the interactive nature of speaking and listening. It emphasises the teacher's management of responses and questions and fails to capture the dynamic and interactive potential of 'whole' class interaction. There is no suggestion as to how a teacher should manage the pupils' interaction with each other and how they should be invited to engage in meaningful discourse.

However, the biggest gap in the literature informing the NLS and the Literacy Hour is the omission of relevant research on pupils working effectively in the unsupervised time during the Literacy Hour. This study hopes to address this omission in the existing research literature.

Social Processes and Cultural Learning Theory.

The study aligns itself with the socio-historical tradition drawing upon the Soviet tradition (Vygotsky 1978, 1979; Vygotsky and Luria, 1956; Leont'ev 1932, 1959, 1975/78 and 1982), Mead (1934) and the contemporary U.S. tradition (Cole, 1985; Rogoff, 1990 and Wertsch, 1985). Vygotsky's work is seminal to the thesis. The fundamental Vygotskian themes, which run through this thesis are: cognitive development is inherently social, speech is action and mediation, the adult as facilitator and the situated nature of cognition. His views will be contrasted with Piaget's ideas on teaching and learning, as these have also been influential on classroom practice in the UK.

Piaget (1932) presented individual children as active learners who assume responsibility for organizing activities, engaging with others and restructuring their own conceptual understanding. He gave scant consideration to the link between culture and theory as the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next was of little significance. Thus, he afforded the adult/teacher a marginal role as Piaget felt that the asymmetrical power relationship between adult and child inhibited the child's independent reflective cognitive development. The adult was cast in the role of facilitator. In fact he gave more credence to the role of interacting with peers in supporting cognitive development. This will be discussed later.

Vygotsky reinstated the adult as expert and placed child and adult interactions at the centre stage of cognitive development. Vygotsky's term 'zone of proximal development', (1978, p.86) suggests how learning is 'guided' or coordinated by an adult so that with the assistance of an expert cognitive growth is fostered and children achieve more than they could on their own. This has been extended by terms such as 'scaffolding' (Bruner, 1976), which describes 'effective tuition' between the asymmetric pairing of two people such as a child and an adult. It describes a special kind of contingent teaching, where the expert is constantly modifying their support in the light of the learner's growing confidence and ability. The support is goal orientated and permits the child to gradually master new areas of competence, with a view to the task being performed independently.

Piaget argued that acquiring knowledge was 'discovery learning', a linear process where people exchange ideas, think about them and then, offer up their separate views for discussion. He believed that children could be left to re-invent knowledge for themselves. In Piagetian research the key

emphasis is on conflict as an inner process. It isolates cognitive processes from social and intersubjective factors. Vygotsky's attested that development does not just happen within the individual child and was concerned with context which gave rise to the notion of the situated nature of cognition. He believed that cognitive states do not reside in the head; they are ways of acting and talking in specific situations that have evolved and are imbued with their own history. The context of teaching and learning either facilitated or hindered the individual's progress towards more advanced modes of thinking.

Vygotsky saw culture as playing a vital role in development. He saw learning and teaching as a matter of 'guided participation' and 'apprenticeship' where people are involved in an active, joint, collaborative intellectual activity. He contended that language and literacy practices are available to each new generation, imbued with their own socio-cultural history. These systems guide the child towards more advanced forms of thought, provide them with tools for thinking about the world and leave them experiencing the world and appreciating their significance in it.

An important aspect of 'cultural theory' is the social nature of cognition and the importance of other people in relation to development. Vygotsky's terms 'intermental' and 'intramental' best explain this. It is argued that ways of thinking and talking are acquired by interacting with other people before they can be internalised. This reverses Piaget's claim that children develop as individuals before they become social beings. Socio – cultural theory adheres to the notion that the social precedes the individual.

Piaget did not discuss any clear role for language, speech or communication in cognitive development whereas socio – cultural theory sees language as a key psychological tool as it allows us to regulate our own, and other people's behaviour, (Vygotsky, 1978). Mediation is a key theme in Vygotskian and socio-cultural theory and is important to this thesis because of its active qualities. It involves mediation as an active process and, therefore, it invites the possibility of introducing a new cultural tool, which has the potential to transform the mediating process. Language is more than just a means of communication it is also the means that creates intelligent meaning and action. People can act on their environment and change it by using 'tools'. The context of learning becomes important, as do the mediational and cultural resources that constrain or enable cognitive activity: practices, artefacts, institutions, rituals and technologies (Vygotsky, 1978).

The emphasis is on the process of learning rather than on the outcomes of it and on the construction of knowledge as a shared entity rather than an individual process i.e. the joint construction of understanding, (Rogoff, 1990; Tharp and Gallimore, 1988). It is argued that this way of working supports cognitive development.

The NLS and the Literacy Hour appear to embrace socio-cultural themes such as interactive teaching and learning and social discourse. It can be argued that the NLS and the Literacy Hour are an attempt to break away from the Piagetian tradition of positioning the individual child at the heart of their own development. The N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour are organized so that the child has access to a range of different social interactions: the support of an adult during the 'whole' class (30 minutes), the 'guided' session (20 minutes) with an adult and peers or the unsupervised time with peers and the plenary with the whole class (10 minutes). However, it is the aim of this thesis to determine whether the N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour provide the opportunity for social and collaborative practices or whether existing practices in the classroom neutralize the effects of such interventions.

A Critique of Vygotsky's Theory.

Vygotsky's research was conducted in an experimental setting and usually involved a dyad under study and so recent research has investigated how his theory stands up in modern classroom settings. In particular, research has considered how Vygotsky's term the 'zone of proximal development' can apply to a whole class situation. It can be misinterpreted during direct teaching sessions as being seen as a form of transmission and that the passing on knowledge is the primary process.

In fact, the Vygotskian view of the adult support facilitating children's development might lead to restrictive practices and has been challenged. Research in the classroom has illustrated that adult/child dialogue can be constraining and does not always permit the dynamics of the joint construction and negotiation of knowledge. For example in Wood 's article (1986) he discusses the teacher's use of questions in 'contrived' learning situations. He noted how difficult it was for a teacher to share understanding, as children are less forthcoming with a teacher where the intention is to teach as opposed to 'guiding' children towards discovery. The teacher tended to dominate the interactions with demands and questions which were exercises in control. The number of teacher questions were often very specific and only a narrow range of answers were possible and so these factors actually inhibited

the children's responses and reasoning. Getting an answer right was judged in terms of how close each pupils' answer could resemble that of the teacher's. Similarly, Rogoff (1993) conducted cross-cultural studies (Mayan and Salt lake City communities) of children participating in adults' work and social activities. One of the main conclusions was that in a context where children participated in adults' work and social activities and where adults did not adopt a teaching role, children showed more intrinsic motivation and assumed more control. It will be interesting to observe whether the Literacy Hour and the N.L.S. reflect Wood's and Rogoff's findings or whether the teacher's use of questioning promotes active interaction. Wood (1986) and Rogoff (1993) would claim that questioning is counter productive to this.

Edwards and Mercer (1981) have also tried to characterise teacher talk and explored one particular teaching strategy: the initiation-response-feed-back (I.R.F.) exchange. They observed that it imposed both social and linguistic constraints on teacher and learners. The children appeared to know that teachers are usually looking for a particular type of answer. It could be argued that the child is 'contingent' on the teacher under these circumstances, guessing what is in the teacher's mind. The child is trying to work out what the meaning of the task is as well as trying to please the teacher. The social features of the interaction are just as salient. This clearly signals the importance of alerting practitioners to the constraining effects of teacher – led discourse.

<u>Mead.</u>

Mead (1934) is another important voice in this thesis. He developed his theory of the social origins of thinking. He attested that through shared, social interactions actions and objects took on meaning or, in his terms, 'symbolic significance'. It was through this meaningful communication that children transcend their understanding to a new symbolic and personal level. Another important feature of Mead's ideas is the term 'the generalized other' where the child can see themselves and their actions from the perspective of another. This is facilitated through a process of internalising meanings and values that advance children's thinking beyond the immediate context to a level of greater self-awareness and self-reflection. To apply these ideas to the N.L.S. would provide an interest in the social and psychological dimension of making meaning which goes beyond the linguistic, skill based approach encountered during the Literacy Hour.

Rogoff and 'Guided Participation'.

This thesis departs from Vygotsky in one major way and that is the monolithic notion that general, universal truths can be established about human nature and culture and, therefore, aligns itself with U.S. researchers such as Rogoff. Contemporary socio-cultural theorists such as Rogoff focus on the qualitative differences among cultures, in a historical, social and psychological sense. Mutual learning and the mediational means that it employs exist in real, complex and diverse cultural, social, historical and institutional settings and these inevitably shape the cultural tools at a generation's disposal. The thesis is not claiming that Vygotsky's theory is flawed rather attention should be given to how it is appropriated in the context of school.

For instance, contemporary researchers, (for example Rogoff 1990; Hoogsteder, Maier and Elbers, 1996), have critiqued Vygotsky claiming that he ignores the child at the expense of the omniscient adult. A 'cultural approach' conducted in the domestic arena on home literacy practices is more interested in the joint nature of the activity and the active participation of the child. These studies argue that pre-school children quite happily share ideas, give reasons, question ideas, consider, agree, involve everybody and take and give responsibility, (Dunn, 1988). This thesis supports the view that mediation is a dynamic process and the child is active in this process.

Rogoff has conducted much of her research in the domestic arena across different cultures. One of her main concepts that seems to unite a number of the major themes of 'cultural theory' is 'guided participation' (Rogoff, 1990). Rogoff accepts that intelligent activity does not exist as 'knowledge' inside someone's head but is achieved through co-ordination and mutual communication with others. Again this supports Vygotsky's idea (1978) that the social dimension (intermental processes) precedes the individual's thoughts (intramental processes). In contrast to Piaget, Rogoff's (1990) account prioritises the social origins of thinking and the importance of people in a child's development. Like Vygotsky she sees a supporting adult as necessary to 'structure' or 'scaffold' interaction. The adult will take responsibility for some of the activity beyond the reach of the child. The child is assigned to the more manageable dimensions of a task. There is a desire to sustain a mutual focus on the same goals.

Ultimately, there will be a 'transference of responsibility' to the child whereby, through the child acquiring new skills and understanding, they can function independently without support. In terms of

this study the transference of responsibility was seen in terms of the interactive processes of teaching and learning whereby small, collaborative groups of pupils took responsibility for their own and others' learning.

Rogoff's (1990) study of 'guided participation' between mother and child dyads maintains that a child is not merely shown what has to be done. She reinstates the child at the centre of their development in a Piagetian sense. The child is active in the joint construction of knowledge. Children do not learn simply by listening to adults talking or by passively watching adults. Talk is a reciprocal business where the child has an agenda and wants the teaching to be relevant and meaningful (Hughes & Westgate, 1997; Tizard & Hughes, 1984; Dunn, 1988). Rogoff emphasises that the adult's role is still important for managing the interpersonal side of support and being sensitive to the child's circumstances and mood. This leads onto one of the most important concepts in 'guided participation' and to this study: 'bridging'. It describes the 'bridging' of prior knowledge with the requirements of the new task at hand. More importantly, it is the bonding or 'fit' between people:

> "The mutual understanding that is achieved between people in communication has been termed intersubjectivity, emphasising that understanding that happens between people; it can not be attributed to one person or the other in the communication."
>
> (Rogoff, 1990, page 67.)

'Bridging' illustrates how managing the relationship: carefully repairing any breaks in concentration, frustration, motivation or self – esteem, 'cannot be attributed to one person or the other in the communication'. Rogoff is not solely attributing the responsibility of 'bridging' to the adult in the situation. She believes that "Children are tuned to pick up interpretations and view points of others" (Rogoff, 1990, page 73) and are learning to negotiate mutual understanding in their communication with others from a very early age. This is in contrast to Vygotsky who gives primacy to the adult in this situation. In terms of this study, the concept of 'guided participation' usefully unites affect and thought. It encapsulates a certain type of appropriate emotional support: "Emotional scaffolding includes the gift of confidence, the sharing of risks in the presentation of new ideas constructive criticism and the creation of a safety zone" (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002)

Intersubjectivity.

Intersubjectivity or 'attunement' (Stern, 1977) is an attractive concept and one that Stone (1998) argues has been omitted from accounts of 'scaffolding' and, it could also be argued, is missing from initiatives such as the Literacy Hour and the N.L.S. Broadly, intersubjectivity is how humans come to know each others' minds. It is a type of interaction where each partner is sensitive to the subjective experience of the other, effectively a 'meeting of minds'. This experience can also extend to partners being engaged and aware that joint attention is required on the same things so that events and tasks can be shared with some agreement about what is prominent in the situation.

A description of intersubjectivity does not really capture the complexity of intersubjectivity. Trevarthen (1979, 1998) is typical of those intersubjective theorists who have conducted studies on infant and mother bonding. He holds a nativist view of intersubjectivity claiming that children are born with the innate skill and inherent motivation to create and maintain intersubjectivity by synchronizing their gestural and vocal repertoire with their mother's behaviour. Bloom (1998), cited in von Tetzchner (in press), states that this inherent motivation enables children to express, understand and influence others' thoughts, intentions and beliefs. In fact, Bloom maintains that these affective states and emotional states have priority over the role that others have in guiding children's participation in the environment. (Rogoff, 1990) and that without motivation and individual needs children would be unable to express themselves through language and people's minds would remain hidden.
Trevarthen (2003) is less emphatic about the genetic basis of intersubjectivity. He endorses the important role of intersubjectivity in helping to develop the child's skill to communicate and understand intentions. He maintains that this is achieved by the development of social and cognitive abilities together with the interaction with adults in the situations which the learning occurs. This is reminiscent of constructivist and usage orientated theories. Anne Kamiloff-Smith (1993) unites both nativist and constructivist perspectives and is critical of Bruner stating that he gives too much importance to social processes and not enough emphasis to cognitive processes. This project, however, as stated earlier, aligns itself with a social constructivist theory such as Bruner which focuses on intersubjectivity as a meaningful and goal directed activity (where humans develop the capacity to read thoughts, intentions, beliefs and mental states) which can only be understood in a social context. Participation in such social interactions and the role of intersubjectivity in this process is vital for children

to become members of social, cultural and language practices. In fact, it is debatable whether one can make a distinction between intersubjectivity and social interaction and participation in cultural activities.

Therefore, the major challenge of any study that aims to promote the social processes of teaching and learning in the classroom is to promote this warm-blooded relationship in the classroom. The social interaction is the actual mediational means to be acquired: a way with words and a way to manage relationships.

Rogoff's studies have involved observing parent/child dyads in the home setting and so to emulate this kind of sensitive teaching between the teacher and a class of the thirty would be a tall order. However, the notions of sensitivity and a commitment to sharing a mutual understanding, implicit in the concept 'guided participation', are attractive as they aim towards such educational ideals as inclusion, equality, tolerance, and respect, which are at the heart of this study. It involves the adult embracing a pedagogy which helps the child to become more powerful through reasoning, making meaning and reflecting rather than through imitation or through deference to authority, textual or pedagogic. It is an attempt to acknowledge the child's perspective and to understand better how the child constructs a model of the world. Mutuality between the child and the adult or peers is achieved through discourse, collaboration and negotiation where beliefs and ideas are discussed through shared interactions and shared reference. A social constructivist view of intersubjectivity is concerned with meaning making and mutual knowledge rather than the achievement of factual knowledge and skilled performance dominating the N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour.

However, Rogoff presents intersubjectivity as a harmonious, symmetrical form and this is not always typical of interactions. Interactions are fraught with opposing ideas, divergent perspectives and experiences as well as personality clashes. An acceptance that interactions are disharmonious reinstates conflict at the heart of intersubjectivity. It also questions the rational view of the human mind and of social interactions.

Cultural Theory, the N.L.S, the Literacy Hour and the Main Argument.

So far it has been argued that the N.L.S. acknowledges the important role of the adult in guiding pupils

during the Literacy Hour. However, it fails to address the responsibility of the adult in managing the interpersonal side of the support and for being sensitive to the child's circumstances and needs. There is a serious omission in the N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour with regards to the social, cultural and personal climate of the classroom. Nowhere is there an inclusion of strategies on how to manage classroom interaction at 'whole' class, 'guided' or unsupervised level or on how to resolve intellectual, personal or social conflict in work groups. This thesis will present an argument that early years children are able to reap the cognitive, social, cultural and personal benefits of working mutually and dialectically.

The Literacy Hour positions the teacher as expert during the 'whole class' and 'guided' sessions. The teacher's ultimate responsibility in the classroom is not disputed but the teacher's role as expert is problematic for many reasons. Pupils often feel inhibited by the restrictive nature of teacher/pupil dialogue (Woods, 1986, Edwards and Mercer, 1981 and Rogoff, 1990) and the teacher becoming 'expert' during the whole class and guided sessions might exacerbate this. Moreover, the view of the omniscient teacher mitigates against achieving a community of learners who share knowledge and does not do justice to the importance of intersubjectivity in transmitting culture.

The N.L.S. applauds the active involvement of the pupil in their own learning but fails to provide details of how this is achievable. If we adhere to a socio-cultural perspective and accept that knowledge cannot be said to exist in an individual's head or lie behind an individual's words, then the act of knowing exists in the interaction and exchanges with others. It is this co-construction of knowledge that is important to this approach to teaching and learning and it why this thesis embraces peer collaborative learning where a child can explicate and revise beliefs in discourse in a more powerful way. The Literacy Hour purports to be concerned with social discourse, interactive learning and the joint construction of knowledge but omits any clear rationale for collaborative speaking and listening practices and fails to provide creative roles for the teacher and pupils as active and reflective participants in a 'community of enquiry'. The context of the Literacy Hour does not facilitate the dynamic relationship between the 'intramental' and the 'intermental' necessary for collaborative thought. As will be seen in the next chapter the study suggests that the 'unsupervised' time might provide the appropriate social circumstances of particular interactions and interpersonal relationships to appropriate the dynamics between the 'intramental' and 'intermental'.

Furthermore, the teacher is often addressing a large group of children of various backgrounds, maturities and abilities. The child enters the classroom and is presented with a dominant school literacy practice, namely the Literacy Hour. When the child encounters school literacy tasks they have to look at such practices in a new way as the structure, roles and language may be different from those practices encountered at home (Mercer, 1995). The format of the task provides an indication of the teacher's philosophy or, more probably, the impact of the organisation of cultural resources and externally imposed curriculum policies. Perhaps, the child who underachieves is not necessarily intellectually incompetent, just unversed in such practices. These pupils need the unsupervised time to rehearse tasks orally and become part of a textual community. A child's achievements do not merely reflect the child's ability in the same way as their 'failures' do not merely reflect their incompetence. Therefore pupils' different requirements and learning styles should impinge on the whole class and 'guided' sessions as well as on the differentiated group work. Whole class teaching might not be suitable for all pupils.

The N.L.S. adheres to the notion of developmental stages and during the Literacy Hour 'scaffolding' has to apply to a whole class context. It is assumed that during the 'whole' class session the same lesson can be delivered to children of 6-7 years and also that this assisted teaching is within the z.p.d. of special needs pupils "whom quickly gain confidence" (page 10). However children are assigned to ability groups for part of the hour where work is differentiated but subsequently the pupils are then expected to 'reveal' their understanding during the unsupervised time and to consolidate their knowledge during the plenary. How far teachers and pupils develop a history of shared understanding and create new knowledge over time (Moll & Whitmore, 1993) is questionable. However, with the drive for an ever-increasing rise in standards reflected in the SAT league tables it is debatable whether the Literacy Hour reflects critical collaboration in the classroom or reinforces the individualism and competition that Beard (1998) claims it sought to reverse.

The next section will review the literature on peer learning research, socio-cultural research and collaborative learning studies as a means of creating intersubjective space in the classroom. Consideration will be given to how peer learning is mediated during the Literacy Hour.

E.S.Weatherby. M7158158. Ringing with Voices: 'Guided Participation' During the Literacy Hour. EdD. 2004.

Chapter 2.

Literature Review of Peer Learning.

Peer Learning and the N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour.

A survey by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL, 1999) shows that 75% of those teachers surveyed were very concerned that pupils would not be engaging sensibly in literacy tasks during independent working for 20 minutes in the Literacy Hour. There is a concern also that owing to the restrictive nature of pupil/teacher dialogue some children might not be actively participating during the teacher led discussion of the Literacy Hour. Furthermore there is no clear rationale offered on peer interactive learning during the Literacy Hour. If it is accepted that language and thought develop through social interaction/discourse then it must be asked whether the best opportunities for teaching and learning are being realised during the whole class and unsupervised sessions. This concern is the driving force behind this study.

The N.L.S. makes reference to pupils working

> "… independently, individually, in pairs or in groups – without recourse to the teacher."
>
> (National Literacy Strategy, DfEE, 1998, page 12).

The Framework omits any guidance on how to manage the twenty - minute unsupervised work, which this study hopes to provide. The Literacy Hour makes the recommendation that groups ought to be organised in ability groups:

> "To enable the teacher to teach at least one group per day, differentiated by ability, for a sustained period through 'guided' reading or writing."
>
> (National Literacy Strategy, DfEE, 1998, page 12).

The following advice is offered in the N.L.S.:

> "Independent work: this happens at the same time as the 'guided' group work. The class needs to be carefully managed and the pupils well trained so that they are clear about what they should be doing and do not interrupt the teacher," (page 12); and on page 13:
>
> "… there should be sufficient resources and alternative strategies for them to fall back on if they get stuck."

It is interesting to note the phrase 'independent work'. It is unclear whether this means working individually which must be difficult for an early years pupil at the start of acquiring school literacy or whether it means that the children should work together in small, self-motivated groups. If it is the former then this individualised learning is the remnants of the Piagetian tradition. If it is the latter then the 'training' and 'sufficient resources' mentioned should permit this. However there is no suggestion as to what form this training should take nor are there examples of the 'sufficient resources' needed or what is expected from pupils working in small groups. There are no suggestions for getting children to work together effectively and no attempt at characterising two of the most important resources or tools in the classroom: interactive talk and active listening.

It is not being advocated that individual, independent activity is undesirable. However, as will be outlined in the next section, talk and talking with others in a collaborative way is one way of encouraging pupils 'to participate, observe and reflect on and practice socially shared ways of knowing and thinking', (Kumpulainen & Kaartinen, 2000). Children need to be guided and given ground rules to apply when talking and working with their peers. This is explored during the discussion on peer collaborative learning.

<u>Peer Collaboration.</u>

The term collaboration will be used to describe interactions where pupils are actively communicating and working together; talking and sharing experiences, goals and references and creating solutions; making joint decisions and evaluating their procedures.

However, some classroom-based research has shown that this process does not happen naturally. Unstructured peer learning or group work is often unproductive, (Bennet and Dunne, 1992). Purposeful and organised group work or 'co-operative interaction' rarely happens. Children sit together but they are involved in 'parallel procedural interaction' (Forman, 1981). Research by Galton, Simon and Croll, (1980) reveals that the children sit together in groups but the pupils are not socialised into working together. This section will review the literature on peer learning research with special references to socio-cultural and collaborative learning in an attempt to understand the most effective way of encouraging 'symmetrical' learning relationships of groups of children working together rather

than the asymmetrical exchanges between child and adult characteristic of the scaffolding practices mentioned earlier.

Peer tutoring or peer learning research advocates that 'effective tuition', 'scaffolding' or face-to-face interaction between an adult and child are not the only supportive learning environment. Social interaction between peers can be seen to counteract some of the constraining effects of teacher/pupil dialogue providing an opportunity to use language actively, away from the constraints of teacher-led discourse. For example, peer interactions have been seen to facilitate certain forms of thinking that are not encouraged when interacting with more adult experts. Kruger and Tomasello (1986) made a comparison between children engaging in moral reasoning both with peers and with a familiar adult. The familiar adult was seen to inhibit reasoning as children were less inclined to ask questions and offer detailed explanations. This suggests that perhaps the children are inhibited by the adult's presence or authority. Moral reasoning invites a more open exploration and, yet, pupils might feel unable to engage in an open exploration of ideas. This might be owing to a perception that the teacher might represent a certain moral line in keeping with their age and status. Pupils might also be aware that there might be potential conflict between the teacher's perspective on things and their own. The mutual relationship between adult and child has to be robust and based on sensitivity and tolerance especially when children are revealing their thoughts, feelings and personal experiences on moral issues. It is understandable then that in these situations children are going to feel vulnerable and reluctant to talk. Pupils might assume that they are going to be lectured or judged. Peer interaction on the other hand might create a space where children feel freer to talk away from the teacher although peer collaborations becomes more problematic as adolescence ensues with the inhibiting effects of "the imaginary gaze' of critical peers'(Murphy, 1997).

Piaget and Peer Learning.

As stated earlier, any discussion of peer interaction will involve the significant contribution of Piaget who flagged peer interaction as important to learning and development.

Piaget (1926) looked at those situations where 'cognitive conflict' was clearly and overtly apparent. Particular interest focused on how children made use of situations involving the conflict of ideas to

progress their development. He maintained that exposure to alternative views revealed the contradictions and the inadequacy in an individual's thinking. The resulting social conflict and pressure influenced self-regulation and resulted in a growth of understanding. However, Piaget claimed that cognitive gains were more likely to happen in the more symmetrical and equally balanced relationship with peers than when paired with adults. He stated that owing to the differences in power and status, conflict was unlikely to be expressed in adult and child interactions. This endorses the belief that groups of children make individual cognitive gains more than they would have done working alone and it also positions children as actively participating in their own learning. Most significantly in terms of the Literacy Hour it also signals the need to maximize opportunities for peer interaction.

However Piaget also claimed that young children were not 'ready' to take part in these peer interchanges because they would be unable to decentre and to take account of other people's views. He claimed that children had to be at the formal operational stage (7 - 11) to reap the cognitive benefits of social conflict. Previous sections have attested that this thesis owes much to research conducted in the domestic arena and that it starts from the premise that young children already possess the skills to question, observe, exchange, negotiate, disagree, exchange and share information e.g. (Dunne, 1998). The difficulty is to facilitate this behaviour in the school context.

Piaget did not characterize the interactive process between peers. However, Piagetian research and those researchers following in his tradition have made considerable gains in our understanding of the importance of social interaction and how it accelerates individual reasoning. Developmental psychologists working in the neo-Piagetian tradition, William Doise and his research associates Gabriel Mugny and Anne-Nelly Perret-Clermont (1984), used Piagetian tasks to discover the cognitive benefits of peer interactions. They explored the perspective taking of children using spatial arrangement experiments. In their studies the child was presented with a model village, which was orientated in relation to a fixed mark. The child was then presented with another base and was asked to reconstruct the village in relation to the fixed point. However the fixed point and its relation to the child might have changed in the meantime. The study used a scientific and an experimental approach and used pre and post- tests on standard measures of concrete operational reasoning. The children were pre tested to determine their aptitude at doing the standardized task before they worked with a peer on completing the task. The task was often in a laboratory setting and children were subsequently post tested to

establish whether they had made any individual cognitive gains after resolving the intellectual and social problem posed by conflicts. The first important finding was that children working together were more often more able to find cognitive solutions that they would not have been able to reach alone. Also, by participating in this joint endeavour they were later able to tackle these tasks on their own.

Recent research from researchers Howe, Duchak and Tolmie (1997) followed the Piagetian tradition of using pre and post tests. 9-14 year olds were involved in conducting problem solving experiments in Science. Interestingly Howe et al (1997) tried to find the missing link between Piaget's notion that ideas are coordinated by an individual and Vygotsky who saw coordinations as social and yet emphasized how these co-ordinations later became internalised. Howe et al concentrated on the social process of reaching a group consensus. They extended cognitive conflict by attesting that conceptual understanding can be boosted by children engaging in conflict, but that this is best achieved via peer debates which conclude with consensus.

Developmental researchers generally focus on whether and when working together with a partner is more effective than working alone. Experimental research and pre and post-test studies assess talk and its outcomes at an individual cognitive level, (i.e. how well…) and variables such as the size of the group and the type of task are controlled. Piaget, unlike this thesis, did not characterise the interactive *process* between peers with the result that some important aspects of the qualities of educational experience for the children involved are being ignored. Part of appreciating the process is to consider contextual issues and not being concerned with establishing more parameters but identifying the existing variables which inhibit or facilitate collaborative learning. Donaldson (1978), in criticism of Piaget's conservation tests, explains how children's reasoning could vary according to the presentation of the task itself. Researchers, in the Piagetian tradition, were over reliant on problems with one correct solution. Donaldson questioned the domination of one perspective. She felt that the format of the tasks and the questions being asked failed the child, as there was a mismatch between the logical structure of the task and the social rules associated with it. For example, when a teacher/researcher pours the same amount of juice from one container into a different shaped container and then proceeds to ask an individual child if the amount of liquid has remained the same, this may lead the child to focus on what looks more rather than the actual amount. However, when the child works with a peer the children are able to share the amounts equally in a drive for fairness. Doise (1984) extended this with the term

'social marking', which refers to the way that the child is receptive to the social norms and conventions implicit in a test. The term 'cognitive conflict' is extended by the term socio-conflict which presents conflict as a dynamic process situated in a social context.

Socio-cultural theory attests that the mind does not comprise of a set of general skills but domain specific capabilities tied to the context of teaching and learning. 'Context' is not neutral. Interactions are embedded in certain social and cultural contexts that are heavily laden with values and have been shaped by historical processes. The values are internalised and saturate individual thought. The child is not only learning a language but its context. The example of the orange juice illustrates that the children were able to grasp the concepts of dividing equally through the social convention of sharing. However, a drive for fair shares is only appropriate in a context, which endorses fairness, equality and justice.

The different features of the context can produce dynamic conflict. Managing this conflict can be a tall order. The above research did not address how the shared responsibility of partners to a problem is maintained and how both partners keep the interpersonal relationships and intersubjectivity intact. Moreover, they did not see peer interactive talk as creating new resources for thinking and nor did they characterise the underlying interpersonal relationships which facilitate change and development.

To summarise the argument so far, cognitive thought has been presented as not simply residing in the head or in the task. Resolving a task is facilitated or impeded by the social context in which the child, the task and the relationships are located. Understanding how these different features are related leads us onto discussing the socio-cultural concept of intersubjectivity.

<u>Neo-Vygotskian Research into Peer Learning: A Social-Cultural Approach.</u>

As discussed earlier, Vygotsky rejected the notion of an autonomous thinker whose learning has materialised through mental reorganisation. He claimed that learning comes about through intersubjectivity, participation and engagement in the shared construction of knowledge and mutual understanding. Researchers in the Vygotskian tradition have highlighted the potential benefits of supportive peer learning partnerships. Light and Littleton (1994) have given an account of research which addresses 'when and how peer interaction facilitates children's learning, problem solving and

cognitive development.' (page 171.) Interestingly one of the conclusions from looking at the research was that in some instances peer interaction did not always promote individual gains. Forman (1981) would also endorse that in some circumstances working with a partner is less effective than working on your own. These studies might illustrate that a person's observable competencies might be affected by the nature of the particular relational context in which they were residing. This has been discussed previously in relation to the inhibiting effects of teacher and child discourse but it can also apply to children working together. The general consensus is, however, that two heads are better than one.

At this point it is pertinent to explore what kind of relational context facilitates peer learning. Vygotsky emphasises teaching and learning rather than joint learning. His account, like Bruner's (1976) explanation of asymmetrical support (scaffolding), seems to involve a more competent peer. Research studies have testified that a more competent peer might tutor a novice and, concurrently, refine their knowledge (Light et al, 1994). This raises the question as to whether an expert or a more competent other is necessary for cognitive development. Howe, Tolmie, Anderson and Mackensie, (2000) conducted a study with 12 and 14 year olds. They were placed in pairs according to their responses on a pre test, which involved them making predictions about objects falling from a plane. They were either placed with someone similar or different in terms of their initial responses during the pre test. Those pupils who showed the greatest post test gains were those that differed in their original predictions and conceptual understanding. However, Light, Littleton, Messer and Joiner (1994) argue in their study that during a detour problem solving task in the format of an adventure game, children of similar ability were able to function better on tasks, as in the other circumstances the more capable partner dominated the interaction. Therefore this perhaps illustrates that peer learning may have something to do with the joint construction of the task rather than with peer tutoring or developing understanding through socio-cognitive conflict.

Furthermore, Vygotsky's theory of teaching and learning does not address the benefits socially or psychologically for the less skilled peer. The difference in findings presented in the previous paragraph raises questions about other determining factors in the situation. Experimental testing focuses too narrowly on outcomes and the structure of the task. There is a need for further observations of children working together in collaborative situations and how they explain, question, discuss, negotiate and compromise through talk.

Vygotskian theory flags the central importance of characterising talk and studying how language is used to express understanding. The gaps in Vygotsky's observation of interaction patterns are that he did not explain how language is used to teach and learn, nor did he focus on the qualities of talk. Furthermore, dyads were used in Vygotsky's studies, which limits its application to larger groups in the classroom.

More recent empirical studies have looked into the educational quality of talk. A few studies focus on something more closely related to everyday classroom activity rather than computer-based tasks. For instance, there have been a number of studies that have looked at peer support as a means of supporting children who are learning to read (Fuchs, Fuches, Mathes, Simmons, 1997). All of these studies have used mixed ability pairs consistent with the Vygotskian ideas, and, indeed, such research has looked at heavily structuring and controlling the nature of the discourse and activity that goes on between the pairings in order to ensure 'effective tuition'. However, none of the aforementioned research has looked at the actual talk used by the children.

Mercer, Wegerif and Dawes, (1999) and Dawes, Mercer and Wegerif (2000) have addressed this issue. Mercer et al have characterised three types of talk used by primary school pupils when they think together at computers: 'disputational', 'cumulative' and 'explorative'. 'Disputational' talk is a reluctance to take on another's views or to actively seek information or to offer examples and is characterised by cycles of assertion and counter assertion. There is a clear demarcation of self-interests and control where intersubjectivity is limited and individuals are uncooperative and competitive. 'Cumulative' talk is where speakers build on each other's contributions in an encouraging, mutually supportive and uncritical way. 'Explorative' talk is offered as an ideal type. In 'exploratory' talk ideas are presented clearly and challenged and are shared and jointly evaluated. Partners reason together and problems are jointly analysed with alternative explanations compared before a joint decision is reached. All in the group are encouraged to speak by other group members. Intersubjectivity is sustained through working constructively and cooperatively.

Mercer et al claim that 'exploratory' talk has an important function in the classroom, which a mere description of the term fails to capture. It is a type of critical thinking that is essential for the successful participation in educated discourse and the education system at large. In fact, 'exploratory' talk is not

just the means by which people think, it is an end in itself (Wegerif and Scrimshaw, 1997). Therefore, Mercer et al (2000) attest that talk between peers or 'interthinking' is a joint creation of knowledge peculiar to schools and that schools have a definite and valuable role in guiding 'interthinking'. Mercer (1995) has shown that teachers need to intervene to establish the sort of 'ground rules' necessary for talking together about a task. Pupils have to be 'guided' on how to share ideas, give reasons, question ideas, consider, agree, involve everybody and take and give responsibility. For Mercer et al collaborative learning is a collective activity embedded in a cultural context. This has led to an interventionist approach whereby Mercer et al designed a number of speaking and listening activities to support the development of children's collaboration and use of 'exploratory' talk. This is relevant to this study which sought to influence the culture of the classroom by taking an interventionist stance.

This new way of thinking has been termed as 'transactive' by Azmitia (1997) and as 'interthinking' by Mercer (2000). It involves the dynamic process of creating joint understanding and the ability to operate on each other's reasoning. Ways of thinking are, therefore, embedded in ways of using language and not merely reflected through language. However, Mercer et al do not seem to address how peers manage to learn about a topic while maintaining their relationship with each other. Recent research from Murphy (2000a) describes how a child's responses to another peer can be seen not just as a response relating to the subject matter, but also of the particular relationship with the peer. (This study will be discussed in detail later). These roles are complex and need to be kept in mind by researchers when studying peer interactive learning. There is a striking similarity between Mercer et al's and this study. They both seek, through a process of enculturation to increase children's participation in authentic learning experiences which promote communal sharing and knowledge construction. It is merely a matter of emphasis where Mercer et al prioritise individual reasoning and individual outcomes whereas this thesis will prioritise processes. However, much of Mercer et al's work includes computers and this thesis will explore and bridge the gap between the 'playful' and the 'schooled' execution of discourse practices (Crook, 1994). Through the use of role play, creating an audience for oral work and encouraging a framework for speaking and listening it is hoped that these situations will be 'authentic', 'complex', open and multifaceted' and 'encourage negotiation, problem posing and solving' so that pupils 'become participants in a learning community', (Kumpulainen & Kaartinen, 2000).

By setting the ground rules for 'exploratory' talk or setting up peer assisted learning strategies Mercer et al (2000) are influencing the culture of the classroom and by doing this they claim to have shaped and transformed thinking and reading practices. The above research also emphasises the teacher's important role in 'guiding' the pupils. In terms of the role of relationships in the classroom, it is important to acknowledge the significant role of the teacher in organising peer group learning and constructing and distributing ways of knowing between people. (This will be discussed in more detail at a later date under discourse). This is an exciting discovery as it creates the opportunity for new thought and ideas – this invites research and intervention. However, the reader of Peer Assisted Learning Strategies research or of Mercer et als' work does not get a sense of the facilitative or restrictive nature of the context in which research participants are positioned.

Brofenbrenner's (1979) perspective on child development is useful here as he claims that children's development is either constrained or facilitated by cultural institutions. Crook (1999) also invites us to study talk in the context of some larger framework of an institutional setting and not positioned with in a researcher's contrived experimental setting. This, he argues, necessitates observing "the immediate environment in which the activity is supported - the artifacts, the technologies, and the spaces for acting," (Crook, 2000, page 162). He also suggests that these interactions rarely stand alone and are part of the history of a school community endeavoring to create shared meaning. Collaborative learning has a supporting environment and this study sought to "analyse the actual spaces within which collaborations are either constrained or resourced," (Crook, 2000, page 161) in the hope of actually optimising these collaborative processes.

However, the relationship between child and environment is a difficult one as the child is not merely a product of their environment. The child, in socio-cultural theory is active in meaning making and interpreting the world and different children may construct very different meaning relationships with the environment. This leads onto a further discussion of the term 'guided participation'.

'Guided Participation.'

Light and Littleton (1994) argue that 'the analyses of cognitive processes in peer interaction cannot be pursued very far in isolation from the social, motivational and emotional dimensions of such interaction' (page 172) and that to acquire a richer account of peer interactive work we 'need to integrate a fuller understanding of children's social perceptions and emotional responses with our

cognitive accounts' (page 186). This study hopes to move away from traditional cognitive accounts interested in the cognitive discrepancies between collaborators and move towards providing a fuller account of peer interactive learning which includes the affective dimension of interaction. The concept of 'guided participation' seems useful in this respect..

Rogoff's work is attractive because she not only contends that children are influenced by the context and the relationships in which they participate but that they are 'active' participants with an emotional life who simultaneously influence those relationships. They are active in meaning making and negotiating new forms of thinking and new areas of knowledge. Furthermore, communication, interpretation and negotiation are integral to the meaningful construction of the teaching and learning context. 'Guided participation' involves mutual effort and the 'bridging' of past and shared experiences and relationships and of shared tasks and goals. It creates the opportunity to get closer to understanding the child's way of thinking rather than the other way round. Rather than children conforming to the adult's line of thought, the teacher facilitates the children's discussion and thoughts. It is in brief the stuff of conversation and therefore it is this collaborative process that is of interest to this study.

Mutuality.

If the collaborative experience is to be optimised, then it is necessary to look at how collaborative activities are resourced, facilitated and restrained. In applying 'guided participation' to peer interaction in the classroom, the notion of 'mutuality' has to be addressed. In carer and child dyads the carer is seen as sensitively tailoring the instruction to the child's needs. What is involved in the activity of teaching is a style of talking that is specialised and demanding of interpersonal sensitivity in the classroom. Peers may have difficulty in building and maintaining this type of collaborative interaction especially when confronted with the demands of an unfamiliar task. Classrooms have a specific set of expectations about social interaction, communication and learning that underpins the exchanges between teacher and pupils. The asymmetrical relationship influences pupils' understanding of their status as speakers, listeners and learners and these are further determined by time management, social control and assessment practices.

Some researchers have addressed the notion of mutuality by looking at the special relationship of friends working together, (Azmitia & Montgomery, 1993). This formed part of an extensive study into

the ability of 4 – 11 year olds to negotiate and renegotiate problem-solving roles with each other. They were involved in a variety of tasks, which included copying models and writing. Azmitia & Montgomery (1993) claim that friendships are less motivated by self-interest and power and that friends show greater mutuality and sensitivity to needs and goals and are better at establishing shared understandings and trust. Friends appear to be more able to challenge views and adhere to an equal share of turn taking and the peer collaborations with friends have also been seen to lead to a larger increase in knowledge. However, Azmitia in her book Interactive Minds: life-span perspectives on the social foundation of cognition cites that there is little consistent evidence as Berndt, Perry and Miller, (1988) and Newcomb, Brady, and Hartup, (1979) failed to find any difference in gains made by friends and non-friends working together. It could also be argued that friends might pander and console each other rather than be critically reflective. Again there is an invitation to look closely at other factors affecting relationships.

Another factor affecting mutuality is the discrepancy between the participant's abilities at the start of the interaction. Azmitia and Montgomery, (1993) have made a considerable contribution to our understanding of the developmental changes in peer interacting minds. Only a brief resume of the findings can be given which cannot do justice to all the rich data in these fields. Azmitia's investigations are from a Piagetian perspective but as has already been presented there is no reason why a socio-cultural framework should not be applied to peer interacting minds in the early years. Azmitia's (1997) research focuses on age related differences claiming that if schools wish to promote egalitarian problem solving roles during early years (which is a factor in this study) then the pairing of children whose skills differ substantially should be avoided although some discrepancy is desirable.

Rogoff (1993) claims that when a task is familiar unequal pairings can sustain collaboration. This leads to the potential of working with different partners once school literacy tasks become familiar. Thus, the children seem able to 'bridge' prior knowledge with the present requirement of the task as well as maintaining the working relationship. The significant findings of the Azmitia and Montgomery's research is the subtle interplay of factors such as age, the nature of the task, the ability of the child and the situation. More research is needed to investigate the interrelationship of these factors across different life-long learning practices and in terms of this study the focus is on early year pupils engaging in literacy tasks.

To return to the notion of 'guided participation', it reinstates the child as an active agent and offers a unique opportunity for children to recognise their contribution and their significance in the context of the classroom. A key way of achieving this is to build their self-esteem as communicators and language users and through intersubjectivity: "..the investment in determining what a partner understands and publicly bringing that into balance with one's own understanding – thereby fashioning a common object of inquiry", (Crook,1999). However, learners may find it difficult to 'bridge' past and present language practices or to sustain relationships and, therefore, this signals the pivotal role of the adult in sensitively forging these 'bridges'.

This has brought the thesis to a mid-way point where collaboration and tutoring are both seen as relevant. The thesis does not want to minimize the adult's authority in a Piagetian sense but wishes to manipulate the authority relationship between child and adult in order to facilitate the child's speaking and listening skills.

<u>A Critique of Rogoff's Theory of 'Guided Participation' and the Reinstatement of Conflict.</u>

Rogoff's theory of 'guided participation' opens up new possibilities for classroom learning but on closer inspection these opportunities appear more modest. It fails to reinstate the importance of conflict in a view of classroom teaching and learning and to widen the view of conflict given by Doise (1984) to include sustaining the joint engagement of those individuals in resolving disagreements of a social and an interpersonal nature as well as an intellectual one.

Dawes, (1997) and Dawes, Mercer and Wegerif, (2000) attested that the different facets of context cannot be treated separately and that different factors will be salient at different times. This will cause inevitable tensions as context involves a social and dynamic interplay between people.

Rogoff's account of the emotional features of adult and child interactions is limited and does not depart sufficiently from research that focused on the 'cognitive' characteristics of individuals. Rogoff has been concerned with boundaries between formal and informal learning but, perhaps, it would be useful to develop how the dynamics of the development of intersubjective understanding between peers is part of a wider learning environment. Far from a harmonious picture, peer interaction in a school context is also constrained and shaped by the teacher's and children's roles, which govern the form and context of

the interactions. Learners have social identities, which affect how they act, how other people act towards them and how they interpret their significance in the social context in which they find themselves. For example, the socially appropriate response might be a much more salient concern for the child than the child aligning itself with the adult by getting the answer correct. The concept of ability certainly affects how children perceive themselves as learners. Setting children into ability groups may influence the ways knowledge is created and may affect the quality of the learning experience and may affect pupils' relationships with peers, adults and themselves. Developing collaborative approaches in the classroom might shed light on how children perceive their ability in relation to the task or to their partner(s). Pupils set aside such academic issues in the pursuit of appearing to be a certain type of pupil, having a certain type of peer image or behaving in a generally acceptable, gendered way.

Another factor of a child's social identity, which is not addressed in this study, is the impact of gender on collaborative group work. Again this puts development on a wider plane as differences in thinking might have their origins in social representations. Murphy (1997, 2000a) has illustrated how girls and boys have different views of the same activity and how these different perspectives influence the task solution. 9 – 10 year olds were observed during a normal science class. Mixed gender pairs were involved in an experiment, which explored the relationship between temperature and the rate of dissolving. Murphy explored how the teacher's intentions and perceptions were often at variance with the child's perception of the activity. Children construct meanings differently as they consider other cues as salient. The boy in the experiment was in tune with the underlying rules and values of the subject, which corresponded with the teacher's. Putting sugar in cold tea pushed the task's reality and social credibility to the limits for the girl and this prevented the pupils from engaging with each other and, indeed, the teacher from appreciating the girl's framework of understanding. Children's understanding of what it is to be a certain pupil or act as a boy or a girl influences how they position themselves in subjects and as learners. Therefore peer collaboration is not just a matter of social interaction but social comparison. The roles that children play are important as they facilitate or constrain their participation and cause conflict between pupils and the subject matter, between pupils and themselves and between pupils and the teacher. This thesis focused on these obstacles and experimented with ways that could minimise these restraints.

It has been argued that encouraging co-operative and collaborative working relationships weaken the focus on the sort of social comparison mentioned in the previous paragraphs, (Ames, 1981). This calls for development to be placed in a wider learning community rather than research observing a set, joint learning activity as the empirical unit of enquiry, (Crook, 1999). Considering other contextual factors creates a greater degree of interdependence between the child and its environment. Furthermore, developing collaborative practices in the classroom might call for the school system to pay greater attention to the social development of the child and to the active role and responsibility of the adult for the learning that occurs in the classroom. A social agenda that addresses the social needs of the child might transpire along with a desire to promote empathy and understanding for others.

A 'Community of Practice'.

The dynamics of developing intersubjective understanding are also constrained and shaped by local practices. This leads onto the possibility of creating a new community of practice: "Practices, routines, rituals, artifacts, symbols, conventions, stories and histories" (Wenger, 1998). Dawes et al's work (2000) and Peer Assisted Learning schemes in reading (Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes & Simmons, 1997; Mathes, Howard, Allen & Fuchs, 1998) have gone some way in encouraging members of a learning community to actively plan collaborative encounters. However, these studies do not explore the constraints of the wider institutional framework in which collaborative activity resides. This leads onto the next important theme to emerge from this discussion of 'guided participation': the relevance of discourse. It is at this level that such government initiatives such as the N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour come into play.

Edwards and Mercer (1987) attest that children are socialised into special ways of learning in the classroom. The teacher plays a key role in involving children in these culturally specific ways of using language or genres. One of the features peculiar to classroom talk that Mercer et al (1999) cites is the visibility of reasoning and talking through thinking. Children have to put their understanding into words and to communicate this to the teacher. The teacher needs to know what the child is thinking, to assess their understanding and to overcome any misunderstandings. However, Mercer et al argued that owing to the teacher's control over discourse the pupil's understanding is limited and often operates at a procedural level rather than a principled one: children saying and doing things because the teacher

wants them to rather than working out a principled understanding of the goals, purposes and concepts of the lesson. The idea that the learner is helped to achieve the construction of some culturally valued knowledge has resulted in 'z.p.d.' being referred to as 'guided reinvention', (Tharp and Gallmore, 1988). The teacher's intervention is needed in making the cultural tools and conventions of a community available to pupils. Learning is constructed through relationships but the important question is whether this knowledge remains as long as the relationships exist. The thesis claims that through peer collaborative talk the final piece of the Vygotskian process can be realised: the final handover of knowledge and control to the pupils. Otherwise pupils will continue to be entrenched in the procedures and rituals of classroom learning rather than grasp the overall purposes, concepts and principles of the tasks. This study embraces the view that classrooms are 'communities' where teachers and pupils participate in a socially guided apprenticeship. This led to the study's parallel concerns with 'bridging' the boundaries between the formal learning taking place in the Literacy Hour and the use of informal, play forms such as role play and involving children in authentic learning activities, (Kumpulainen & Kaartinen, 2000).

The position of the individual in the situation has to be addressed in such a radical view of language and thought. Mercer et al (1999) focused on the cognitive and communicative components of collaboration and gave scant coverage to interpersonal variables. Michael Halliday (1985) outlines two functions of language: one as a tool for getting things done and, two, an interpersonal function. Vygotsky's term 'Activity' also describes the personal involvement of people in situations and breathes subjectivity into the teaching and learning process. However, Vygotsky said little of the affective, motivational and self-confidence sides to learning. The concept of 'guided participation' also applauds the subjective arena: the personal views of individuals, their history, experience, needs and interests. The needs and purposes of children, their actions, their relationships with other people and their emotions may cause tensions. Crook (2000) also breathes agency into the child:

> "To be a collaborator is to enter into an interpersonal exchange in which it is understood that there should be a sustained investment in constructing shared meaning. Talk and action is recruited towards negotiating, updating and reviewing that achievement. Progress in this enterprise will involve both a cognitive and motivational dimension."
> (p.166)

Thus encouraging the acquisition of collaborative language and practices in schools is difficult, as there are social, emotional and motivational factors to consider.

Essentially the thesis wants to explore peer collaboration and keep two areas in sharp focus: the *process* of keeping intersubjectivity intact and the facilitative or inhibiting features of the socio-cultural (teaching and learning) context in which pupils reside. Rogoff has signaled the difficulties of interpersonal problem solving. However, the thesis wishes to widen the term of conflict to include the difficulties in connecting people and context, those difficulties which might in turn mitigate against achieving, shared experience and intersubjectivity. As mentioned earlier, 'guided participation' seems to offer the most useful framework for encouraging intersubjective learning: the sensitive sharing of understanding that is mutually recognised and helps other people to learn. However, greater relevance should be placed on understanding the negative as well as the positive processes of collaborative activity.

<u>Peer Learning, the N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour.</u>

Essentially the thesis wants to capture the situated nature of collaborative activity as well as presenting the child as an active meaning maker. This is exciting as it then presents learning communities as thriving as they are engaging individuals in personally meaningful activities and these individuals in turn contribute and enrich their communities. Thus, the thesis suggests that the opportunities for collaborative learning ought to be encouraged during the Literacy Hour and it will be interesting to discover whether the Literacy Hour does in fact do this. If not, it is the researcher's intention to optimise this potential within the parameters of this study.

The Literacy Hour leaves children to work unsupervised in groups. The thesis has already indicated that pupils left to work in small groups do not collaborate and, more importantly, do not know what is expected of them when they are told to work together, (Bennet and Dunne, 1992; Edwards and Mercer, 1987; Mercer, 1995; Wegerif and Scrimshaw, 1997). Unsupervised literacy learning might evolve into an isolating experience. Children working away from adults can soon dislocate themselves from the task at hand. This is compounded by the inhibiting effects of teacher led discussions, the drive for formal assessment, the narrowly conceived nationally presented pedagogies, the tight time limits and organisation and the insufficient guidance on how to manage learning in

unsupervised time, which leaves the question begging as to when are children actively engaged in meaningful discourse during the Literacy Hour.

The socio-cultural research on peer learning attests that collaborative learning does not happen by itself. Moreover, these collaborations are located in a wider context involving personal differences, cultural constraints, duties and roles. The teacher has the responsibility to organise groups of learners and continually gauge existing levels of understanding through talk. By doing this they are 'guiding' the process of thought and language. This assistance, in turn, is related to the wider 'scaffolding' practices of the classroom. With very young children this confirms the need for the teacher to take the lead and to put these into practice with their interaction with the class. This highlights the importance of the 'whole' class and the 'guided' sessions, which should not be seen as separate from the peer group interactions, but as an integral part of encouraging caring and collaborative thinking. The 'whole' class and 'guided' discussions should demonstrate to children:

1. the use of problem solving strategies and explanations;
2. the meaning and purpose of activities;
3. how to structure exchanges;
4. how to give mutual support;
5. how to take an active part;
6. how to bridge past experiences to current tasks so that there is a sense of past and present understandings towards some clearly defined goal (see Mercer and Rojas Drummond, 1991) and
7. how to act as an audience.

This would create a rich social tapestry of common knowledge.

The unsupervised group not only becomes a half way house where children can master difficulties in groups before dealing with them on their own. It could also been seen as bridging the language practices of the children with the language practices of the school or, indeed, the reverse as the teacher becomes open to the social framework reference from which the child operates. There has to be a

careful balance between initiating pupils into certain ways of knowing and valuing the children's home language practices.

The unsupervised time also creates a space for thinking. It is an intermediate transforming context where children can restructure their cognitive understanding away from the confining constraints of adult/child interaction. More significantly peer interaction facilitates a type of restructuring, which arises from mutuality, the experience of working with another and of interacting in a social and relational context. However, the importance of the adult in facilitating this process cannot be over estimated. The children are cultural apprentices and the teachers are cultural guides (Edwards and Mercer, 1987; Rogoff et al 1993,). Instead of the 'alternative resources' mentioned in The Literacy Framework this study is arguing for establishing a resource of mutual teaching and learning practices as an area of common knowledge, which reflects intersubjectivity.

This level of engagement is difficult in direct teaching to large classes. Developing mutual collaboration in the classroom is an essentially cultural activity that only takes place if is socially organized and personally meaningful. This again is where the teacher has ultimate responsibility in choosing groups carefully and integrating an active program of personal and social education. Thus, an individual's disengagement might result from a reaction to certain circumstances, or features of the task rather than from a lack of ability. In fact, one might beg the question as to whether we can safely talk in terms of the 'more' and 'less' able. However, the fact is that schools do. The N.L.S.'s and the Literacy Hour's recommendation that the groups ought to be streamed necessitates looking at peer learning rather than peer tutoring.

The main concerns are that the grouping of children according to ability might lower the level of attainment in some groups. Problems are compounded when groups are streamed by ability. Grouping children by ability might encourage social comparisons and this may affect pupil performance on a given task. 'Less able' pupils might find themselves further marginalised from school literacy practices.

It is possible for children in these circumstances to work independently i.e. individually or to misbehave. In addition, in terms of the unsupervised groups it is important that their speech does not get

dislocated from the main discourses in the classroom. This concern is magnified when we think of the 'less' able group working without the teacher. Even if a group collaborates effectively their talk may not be consolidated through incorporation into classroom discourse. This is where the teacher is required to intervene and 'bridge' these experiences during the plenary.

Furthermore, the 'less' able groups may suffer from being grouped together with children who not only have difficulty with the task but are also challenged when managing learning relationships (Wood, Littleton & Chera, 2003). This may leave these pupils no alternative but to work individually or to disengage completely.

Research on peer interactive learning has mainly involved work with pupils from Key Stage 2 and above. This is probably the result of the Piagetian notion that children were unable to decentre in the early years. This study intends to contribute towards a richer account of the intersubjective nature of peer collaborative learning in the early years and will contend that this has to be integrated with a coordinated and comprehensive program of social and personal education. The encouragement of this might counteract the organisation of groups streamed by ability during the Literacy Hour.

Socio-cultural theorists claim that interactions are embedded in larger cultural settings that influence the task solutions and collaborative activity (e.g. Crook, 1994). It will be interesting to see whether the Literacy Hour reflects dominance, competition and conflict or whether the environment can be crafted to illustrate cooperation, collaboration and 'guided participation'.

The N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour have identified the value of group work in supporting teaching and learning but do not empower practitioners with ways of managing independent group work where children are required to work in small, self – motivated, collaborative discussion groups. This study hopes to fill this gap but does not want to present teacher/pupil interaction as an ideal to be emulated during collaborative work with peers. The sections on peer collaboration have illustrated that peer interaction possesses different features and promotes different ways of thinking and acting which free the participants from the restrictions of teacher led talk.

The unsupervised time cannot be fully understood without reference to the 'whole' class 'guided' and plenary sessions. It needs to be asked whether the pedagogy and teacher – learner relationships experienced in 'whole class' and 'guided' group sessions prepare children with the ground rules to work unsupervised. The problem is whether teachers are willing to relinquish a ritualised and hierarchical teacher/learner relationship.

The aim is for the teacher to actively encourage children to talk to each other, actively encourage children to think for themselves, to think critically, and to solve problems creatively during the directed sessions. To move towards a situation where teachers and children are equal and where teachers listen attentively and respond with a 'maybe' rather than with another opinion. To move towards a situation where children participate *actively* and *meaningfully* in literacy practices.

Finally, this discussion leads to the main aims of the thesis, which arose from two concerns: to examine peer interactive learning in its cultural, historical, and institutional setting and to change the cultural environment in an attempt to realise the potential of peer interactive learning.

The Research Questions.

The research questions of the thesis are:

1. Do children work collaboratively during the unsupervised time of the Literacy Hour? Do they help each other by asking each other questions, seeking each others' opinions and explanations and reaching some sort of group consensus?

2. Does work related speaking and listening during the Literacy Hour facilitate or inhibit peer interactive learning? Does the teacher establish collaborative working practices during the 'whole' class and 'guided' sessions? Do these practices then transfer to pupils working together on their own during the unsupervised time?

3. Does an initiative for peers working collaboratively during the unsupervised time of the Literacy Hour increase participating voices?

Chapter 3.

Methodology.

Introduction.

Chapters 1 and 2 discussed the theoretical framework underlying the research questions and intimated at the wider relevance for classroom practice during the Literacy Hour. Having reviewed the literature and formulated the research questions this chapter now attempts to reflect on the most suitable research methodology to use. This will begin with an exploration of the research traditions which have looked at the social processes of teaching and learning in various contexts and assess those best suited to the research questions under consideration. Particular attention will be given to research on peer collaborative learning with reference to experimental designs on cognitive conflict accelerating reasoning and innovative research which focuses on peer training and the actual qualities of peer interactive talk. The research design will then be explained giving details of the participants, the methods and the analytical framework. This is followed by an evaluation of the methodology and research tools employed with suggestions for modifications and for illuminating future lines of inquiry.

As the previous chapter has indicated this study has arisen out of a concern that the Literacy Hour may limit the types of interaction between teacher and pupils and between pupils and their peers. At worst it might exclude pupils from engaging in school literacy tasks in any meaningful way. A research design was therefore needed which could illuminate some of the possibilities for encouraging the 'active' engagement of teachers and pupils in school literacy practices.

Qualitative or Quantitative?

Broadly, the selection of methodology for research interested in collaborative learning can be conceived of as a choice between qualitative and quantitative techniques. Quantitative methods are associated with experimental approaches concerned with subjects carrying out specially designed problem-solving tasks. Interactions are analysed using some sort of coding scheme which yield quantifiable variables and out comes. The classroom under observation in this study was a part of a larger and complex educational setting. The study required a design which would do justice to the rich layers of context and arguably quantitative research alone could not capture this. The process of

understanding the behaviours and practices of the classroom was an exploratory one. Quantitative methods would be more appropriate in a situation where the researcher already had a set of predetermined categories of behaviour or could isolate variables. Furthermore the study did not wish to isolate variables (even if it were possible) as this removes and reduces the complexity and cultural characteristics that would capture a full account of literacy practices.

Qualitative research is perhaps more appropriate when trying to ground analysis in the 'real' life experience of the research participants as seen from their own worlds. Its focus on natural settings and processes is more attuned to the sort of study that wants to make a detailed observation and provide a 'thick description' of how the Literacy Hour impacts on the processes of teaching and learning. Quantitative research is more appropriate in those situations where the data is more amenable to being counted or calculated or lies in its capacity to handle large sets of data. Qualitative analysis allows the researcher to trace developing concepts in a dialectical way which a scheme concentrating on single utterances might not capture. It seemed to facilitate the process of reflection and interpretation necessary for such an exploratory project and necessary for meaning change where meanings are constantly negotiated and renegotiated during interactions:

> "It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotions and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self feelings. It inserts history into experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard."
>
> (Denzin, 1989, p.3.)

Coding schemes fail to capture the temporal dimension of meanings changing over time (Crook, 1994) and so qualitative analysis seemed more appropriate to a study concerned with the study of collaborative learning and the development of shared knowledge. Qualitative analysis also keeps the original scripts and the interpretative analysis that accompanies the scripts are open to scrutiny whereas coding methods generally obscure the original observational data and interpretative analysis, (Edwards and Mercer, 1987, p. 11). There is a great and continuing debate between the differences and

similarities in qualitative and quantitative research and it is not one that shall be reviewed here.

Essentially a research design has to be practical and collect data that will address the research questions of the study. This ultimately hinges on the purpose of the study and the research questions. The research questions are:

1. Do children work collaboratively during the unsupervised time?

2. Does work related speaking and listening during the Literacy Hour facilitate or inhibit peer interactive learning?

3. Does an initiative for peers working collaboratively during the unsupervised of the Literacy Hour increase participating voices?

A detailed discussion of how theses research questions were addressed through the methodology will feature in section 3.4. The next section will present a more detailed discussion of the theoretical grounding of the method.

Collecting Data.

'Anthropological Evaluation'.

The research incorporates different aspects of anthropological evaluation: 'illuminative', 'democratic', 'case study', 'naturalistic' and 'fourth generation' evaluation (Hamilton, 1976). Anthropological evaluation is useful as it has this potential to relate theory and practice and advance professional knowledge by academic means which, quintessentially, this study intended to achieve. It involves an empirical enquiry into a topical issue which fitted the initial stages of this study when the characteristics of the nature of the Literacy Hour Practices were sought.

The study was also keen to work within the constraints of the real life context and not to study collaborations at tasks that are self-contained, short and divorced from the rest of classroom life. To some extent research into peer collaborations has taken the form of controlled experiments or observations. This study sought to take a fuller account of the social context in which such exchanges

take place in an effort to gain access to the community of practice as shared history. Such evaluation takes place in real classrooms (not examining a decontextualised event or experiment). It is used to illuminate the processes by which policies and forms of practice are realised in particular situations.

The researcher required an analytic approach that permitted the flexibility to embrace perplexity and to address problems. In the early stages of the project the boundaries between the practices, behaviours and the context were not clear and to make sense of these would require time. Therefore the first of the research questions could be addressed in an attempt to make intelligible to the researcher and others how the speaking and listening practices during the Literacy Hour inhibited or facilitated peer interactive talk.

As indicated earlier in the literature review, intersubjective experience is important to the study rather than individual experience. Case Study is appropriate as it involves writing about the participants' experience from their point of view and looking at a real life context. The study is interpretative, using the participants' voices. They are used to illuminate the processes by which the Literacy Hour is realised in particular situations. In line with this, and to return to the title of this study and to the concern that the analysis reflects a range of voices, it is important to include interviews from the children (Mac Donald, 1977). At the end of the intervention the children are asked what they think they are doing when they are 'participating' in literacy or being asked to work in unsupervised groups, (see Appendix 2). By doing this the researcher can monitor how the participants engage in events changing in ways that make 'a difference'. It has the potential to relate theory and practice which is important when reflecting on classroom practice. However, the researcher is not a practitioner researcher from the case study tradition. Like a narrator the researcher is not in control of events but removed from the action. The benefits of being a non-participant is that pupils may 'open up' and then, maybe, the story can be written in a more impartial way. The draw backs of the researcher being a non-participant are that they have less control and autonomy over the study.

The researcher later rejected the non-practitioner role for a more 'active' one during the intervention phase of the research, (for further details see section 3.2.2. on Action Research). The class and the target groups in particular accepted that researcher was concerned with the business of teaching and learning. Although the researcher is not a primary teacher, the researcher's experience as a secondary practitioner

was invaluable. Past experiences as a secondary teacher led the researcher to *expect* that the practices happening in a primary classroom would be less formal and have more emphasis on oral work and playful interaction. However, this was not the case as the practices in the primary classroom appeared strikingly similar to those found in a 'traditional' secondary classroom. Therefore, it is not solely accurate to claim that this is non-practitioner research as the study is a product of the researcher's judgment and this judgment is influenced by the researcher's professional socialisation.

A case study can be criticised on several levels as being 'unscientific' and some critics have criticised the quality of the research produced, (Atkinson and Delamont, 1985). Such criticisms are concerned at its imprecise, impressionistic and subjective style and the doubts over its generisability and replication. This study makes no claims to be scientific in a positivist sense. It is not the researcher's intentions to measure the effectiveness of the Literacy Hour. Rather the study is concerned with the *process* of classroom interaction and the multiple perspectives and behaviours which influence this process in an inverted and intangible way. However, such criticisms can be ameliorated by applying a process of triangulation. This involves comparing two or more views of the same thing so that data from different sources can be used to corroborate, elaborate or illuminate the research. In terms of the present observational study the researcher chose to compare and contrast the different perceptions of the researcher, the teacher, the children and the literature on the teaching and learning processed during the Literature Hour.

Other critics take an ethical and political stance criticising anthropological evaluation for being exploitative and 'uncritical' in the sense that its vision is too narrow, (Jenkins, 1979 and Elliott, 1991). The stance this study makes is perhaps more attuned to critical research. Again in contrast to the positivist model, critical research seeks to uncover "…the ways ideology shapes social relationships", (Kincheloe R.L., 1993, p.p. 2-3). It strives to include a range of perspectives with the intention of mapping out the social world of the classroom. The most obvious aspect of this research is the explicit political stance it assumes. There is a concern to extend "… a human's consciousness of himself or herself as a social being. An individual who has gained such a consciousness would understand how, why, his or her political opinions, religious beliefs, gender role, or racial perspectives had been shaped by dominant perspectives." (Kincheloe, R.L., 1993, p.p. 2-3). The present study seeks to explain how the dominant perspective of the Literacy Hour has influenced the speaking and listening practices

of the teacher and the pupils in the primary classroom. This requires a process of self-reflection which the next type of research approach permits.

'Action Research'.

As discussed previously the range of contexts and the changing role of the researcher necessitated a multi method approach. Once it was established that generally interactions in the classroom did not facilitate peer collaboration, the researcher decided to trial an intervention that would encourage pupils to participate in 'authentic' learning activities.

As mentioned previously, case study is criticised for accepting the 'exploitation' of people and for not seeking to empower people, (Hammersley, 1995, p.p. 11-14). Borrowing from the action research tradition (Lewin, 1946 and 1948) could mitigate against the perceived failure of the case study to do this. Action Research is concerned with the practical and places research in the hands of the practitioner. Chapters 6 and 7 illustrate how Action Research is more attuned to the nature of professional practice, which is characterised by knowing-in-action (Schon, 1983) or reflection in action which is to think about what one is doing while doing it in an attempt to transform and improve practice.

> "In a topology of professional knowledge there is a high ground and a swampy lowlands. On the high ground, people work with clean abstract issues. These issues lend themselves to clear-cut analysis to produce neat conclusions. In the swampy lowlands, however, people work with the messy, unarticulated problems of real life. These problems do not lend themselves to clear analysis, because often the problems are not well defined, and tend to change."
> (McNiff, 2000, P.P.15-16).

Its exploratory nature is appropriate to this study where the researcher was adopting a social cultural stance and Chapter 6 gave the researcher an insight into the context in which the intervention was situated. Reflection on observations of the activities and interactions allowed a gradual analysis of the facilitating and constraining features of the context discussed in the Grounded theory section. This, in turn, led to the formulation of ideas of how to encourage collaborative interaction when the activity is performed again and is the subject matter of Chapter 7: Setting a the New Agenda of 'Guided

Participation'. Action Research permits an iterative or cyclical process to examine, clarify and assess existing situations or activities; the expected outcome is then learning and improvement. A broader view of the context in which classroom exchanges took place, enabled the researcher to identify certain restrictions which were seen to inhibit children's participation. For instance, during 'whole' class sessions pupils were not encouraged to ask each other questions. During the intervention the pupils were actively encouraged to ask questions of each other, (see Chapter 7). The effect of loosening these restrictions were then monitored during the intervention. Action research then adheres to the view that research and practice are mutually supportive and related in a reiterative process of reflection and modification. It offers the freedom to experiment and to reflect and change the nature of the intervention in response to the ongoing cycle of intervention. The action phase of the project is integral to the process of data collection, analysis and the writing up. It is fitting in a thesis which promotes 'active' learning that the researcher should be cast in the role of active learner also. In fact, the researcher's role as an Action Researcher was appropriate as it permitted a continuing quest to integrate different knowledge areas such as knowledge-based information with research information and practical experience and skilled judgment which have formed this study.

However this study is not an Action Research project in a pure sense. Stenhouse, (1975); Nixon, (1981) and Elliot,(1991) see action research as making a direct and substantial contribution to practice by operationalising educational objectives and measuring effectiveness and reliance on 'systematic observation'. However, Action Research fails to appreciate the *process* of classroom interaction and the multiple perspectives of teachers and pupils (Walker, 1978; Walker and Adelman, 1975; Delamont; Delamont and Hamilton, 1984) which rest at the heart of a study concerned with social processes.

Unlike the Action Research tradition the researcher in this study is not solely reflecting on their own process but on the practitioner's. Nor is the researcher a paid member of the school monitoring classroom practice. However, as shall be discussed in a later section the researcher has the potential to be used as a resource for others in the spirit of "client-centred consultancy" (Cockman, Evans, Reynolds, 1994).

However to pilot and monitor an initiative and to encourage ways of managing physical and symbolic resources in the classroom during the unsupervised time, it was necessary for the researcher to adopt a

participant role. This led to the researcher taking whole class sessions during Circle Time and Show 'n' Tell which the teacher perceived as more suitable occasions for encouraging a different type of discourse. During the intervention stage, when normally groups worked 'unsupervised' the researcher 'guided' the pupils on ways of managing talk and relationships. The researcher was directly relating with the pupils and interacting with them in such a way as to challenge the traditional asymmetrical relationship between the teacher and the pupils. This involved the researcher, as can be seen in Chapters 6 and 7:

- ✓ simulating a situation of symmetry and the children:
- ✓ taking responsibility for their own learning
- ✓ asking their own questions of the text and of each other
- ✓ seeking and giving explanations
- ✓ analysing the strengths and weaknesses of theirs and others contributions
- ✓ making connections or 'bridging' their comments with those of others or other knowledge areas
- ✓ seeking consensus or a compromise
- ✓ making choices of how to work, with whom to work and which resources to use
- ✓ being open to the ideas of others'
- ✓ evaluating their own work in accordance with an agreed set of criteria
- ✓ working in a positive, encouraging and inclusive way
- ✓ showing a mutual concern for each others' learning
- ✓ instigating and managing conflict
- ✓ adopting a variety of roles to keep them engaged with the task and relationships at hand
- ✓ being aware of the social purposes of the task and
- ✓ being involved in the joint construction of text

This flexibility in role was important because real-world problems do not generally present themselves in ways which match with knowledge produced by researchers or Government initiatives.

The participant versus the non-participant debate has in itself resulted in criticism, questioning whether researchers as opposed to practitioners should conduct research (Schon, 1983). The present political climate and recent initiatives such as monitoring, appraisals, performance management and inspections have left practitioners feeling that knowledge about teaching appears to exist out side the teaching 'profession'. A researcher entering the field with their own agenda will find it very difficult to work with a uncooperative practitioner especially in the present climate as this study illustrates.

Working with a practitioner makes demands on the researcher's interpersonal skills as it requires sensitivity when trying to reflect on and influence another's teaching and even greater sensitivity is required when the teacher is reluctant to participate in the study. However as Dawes et al's (1992) work shows researcher and practitioner collaborations can be mutually satisfying.

'Guided Participation'

The relationship between the researcher and the teacher can be described as a process of 'guided participation'. The researcher was involved in a process of 'guided participation' encouraging individuals (perhaps, best described as social partners or community members) in a daily endeavour of sharing, working and negotiating together which, in turn, constitutes and transforms cultural practices.

The role of the researcher was that of facilitator, 'guiding' the teacher's participation in the research and taking responsibility for the recording, the transcripts, and the written analysis. The teacher was presented with the transcripts on which were written questions that both teacher and researcher needed to address. It was an opportunity for the teacher to engage with some of the issues.

In terms of general methodological approach the research reflects the title, 'Guided Participation'. In contrast to Action Research where the practitioner may choose to place their practice under scrutiny and reflection, 'Guided Participation', involves the practitioner and the researcher embarking on a precarious journey of subjecting the practitioner's practice to critical reflection. In this case the researcher chose the area to be studied, an area which the school had meant to address. Perhaps, an alternative or ideal situation would be where teacher and researcher agreed together an area for review.
In the initial stages the researcher took responsibility to initiate discussion on how talk is planned and how the teacher encouraged collaborative relationships in the classroom. The researcher needed to

respond to the teacher, providing information and encouraging the teacher to focus progressively on her relationship with the class and on peer relationships in the classroom. The hardest task was to sustain a mutual focus and desire on the same goals. The teacher varied in her willingness to initiate and sustain dialogue with the researcher and with the children due to the contextual constraints she perceived as a teacher trying to raise and maintain pupil attainment.

There was a fine balance between the researcher's concerns and the teacher's interests and understanding of the Literacy Hour from their own frame of reference. The researcher needed to reassure the teacher that her needs or interests would not be marginalised and that her views and experience were relevant to the research process. Essentially, any problems in co-operation were seen to be the result of the limited autonomy of the teacher and the restrictions imposed on her by curriculum policies, assessment procedures and parental expectations. The researcher's agenda was yet another perspective which increased a sense of conflict in the practitioner's understanding and responsibilities. Failing to keep intersubjectivity intact was to put the study in jeopardy. This was reminiscent of Rogoff's term 'bridging' or the 'fit' between people.

In the true spirit of 'guided participation' the teacher was given the opportunity to be an 'active' participant. The study aimed to resonate with a number of voices, not just the researcher's. Thus, the voices of the participants, both pupils' and teacher's, were active in the study and informed the project. This, as will be indicated later, helped to validate the findings.

Ultimately it was hoped that there would be a transference of responsibility to the teacher whereby through the teacher gaining new insight and confidence they could function independently without guidance. In fact, this has implications for policy making and practice and for the utilization of research findings. Weiss (1980) has questioned whether decision making conforms to a highly rationalistic pattern. Problem solving is an iterative process which involves a constant cycle of reappraisal and negotiation. It is not about abstract knowledge alone but involves practical experience and judgment all of which are facilitated or inhibited by the immediate and larger social scene. In 'Usable Knowledge' Lindbolm and Cohen (1979) argue that decision making is complex and accomplished through various forms of social interaction This study is one of many forms of interaction which might influence policy making or, in a modest way, provide practitioners with the means of understanding

their own behaviour and situation which, in turn, will enable them to transform behaviour and practices. Thus theory becomes the 'property' of the practitioner's once again. These influences will only be realised over time in unpredictable and unexpected ways but they will be driven by a desire to realise certain human ideals.

Despite all the difficulties and tensions it was important not to compromise the integrity of the researcher or the integrity of the project. The relationships in the classroom still placed the children in a vulnerable position. Children had their concerns and interests and their rights to good educational provision. They had a voice which has a right to be heard too. However, the greatest challenge is to broaden participation in educational research and to include the children's observations, reflections and evaluations in the research process. Ultimately the researcher wants to make clear that the picture portrayed is a partial one interpreted by the researcher, reflecting that researcher's personal characteristics and socio-historical circumstances, (Hammersley, 1995). Thus research is positioned between conflicting needs and concerns and as a result is a political enterprise.

<u>Analysing Data.</u>

<u>'Grounded Theory'.</u>

A predefined set of themes were rejected in favour of a flexible design that allowed for an open and exploratory study. The overriding themes which united this thesis were the concepts of 'guided participation' and exploring the cultural niche in which 'guided participation' would manifest itself. It was uncertain as to how usefully the concept would apply to a classroom setting. Thus flexibility was needed so that sub-themes could emerge as components of the main theme contributing to a reworking of the theory of 'guided participation' as it applies to classroom practice. Grounded theory permits this highly iterative process of exploring a concept over a range of real life contexts which is appropriate to a study that emphasizes the social and contextual nature of learning and development (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Wertsch, 1991).

The study was opposed to studying discrete collaborative sessions decoupling talk from its material circumstances. A more co-coordinated picture of talk as an embedded and situated activity was required. It was necessary to encourage a dynamic and dialectical relationship between talk and context

in an attempt to explore how pupils' participation in meaning-making processes with peers and adults is facilitated or inhibited by the context in which they are embedded. This process is a dialogic one and central to the sociocultural stance that perceives the development of thinking and understanding as being mediated by semiotic tools embedded in the sociocultural context (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Wersch, 1991). Individual thinking emerges from social activity and is dialogic in nature. In fact, it might be argued that participation in social interactions is not different from the internalisation of social interactions (Harre and Gillet, 1994). Therefore, the analysis needed to be a cyclical one, involving a constant process of reflection and the evolution of ideas, themes and concepts on discourse and the context in which it is embedded in an attempt to experience learning as enculturation. As the study evolved there was a dynamic interplay between ideas, different sites and different texts. Transcripts were read and reread in a constant process of comparison and contrast. A general theory of 'guided participation' as it applies to classroom practice was generated from data and consequently the theory was seen to be grounded in the social activity it sought to explain (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

The study needed a framework which allowed for the steady (and probably incomplete) growth of theory on 'active', collaborative and 'guided' participation rather than testing theory. These concerns cut across all three research questions. In the first two research questions there was an attempt to discover how the practices during the 'whole' class and unsupervised time facilitated or inhibited 'active' and collaborative learning. The researcher entered the field with a reasonably open mind and sharpened focus as the study progressed. There was ample opportunity to reflect on the multiple qualitative facets of these concepts. Initial hunches, hypotheses and conjectures were refined and reformulated through the dialectical relationship between personal experience, professional judgment, the literature and the data. Similarities and diversities were then sought during the intervention in an attempt to appreciate the multiple qualities of concepts of 'active participation', 'guided participation' (Vygotsky and Rogoff), and engaged, collaborative talk (Mercer, et al, 1999). These were further explored by creating opportunities for pupils to engage in meaningful tasks which encouraged their authentic voices and promoted communal sharing and knowledge building.

The initial study and the first phase of the main study was used to trial this approach so that a rich layer of different contexts could be achieved from observing 'whole' class literacy sessions (Chapter 5) to studying pupils during the unsupervised time (see Chapter 4). There was a constant movement from

the specific site of the 'whole' class and unsupervised sessions during Literacy to observing other social contexts where class interactions were taking place such as in Circle Time and Show 'n' Tell (Chapter5) as well as considering the broader cultural issues raised by implementing the National Literacy Framework and the Literacy Hour. For the initial study, on the spot field notes were written up and transcripts were made of the teacher led and unsupervised sessions. For the first phase of the main study transcripts were used .These were then accompanied by commentary on conceptual issues which illuminated the mechanisms and patterns of interaction across domains that posed possible obstacles and hindered collaborative learning as can be seen in Chapter 5. The main focus was on the interaction between the teacher and the pupils and how this might facilitate or limit peer interaction during the unsupervised time. There was some sense of the questions that should be asked but no fixed ideas about the answers that might arise or what the resultant 'theory' in response to them might be.

Certain features of the context were identified as imposing restrictions on collaborative activity. Further discussion of these obstacles and supporting material can be found in Chapter 6 and Appendix 1 (pages XVI and XVII).These features were considered at three main levels: the immediate context of the classroom, the whole school context (to a lesser extent) and the wider influences of initiatives and directives from Government e.g. the N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour. The three dimensions are treated separately although it is recognized that they are closely intertwined. Features of the context which posed as obstacles to collaborative activity were:

1. the time restrictions of the Literacy Hour;
2. the limitations imposed by a drive for individual written outcomes and assessment typified by the SATs;
3. revering the text whether it is teacher speak or a written text;
4. the existing cultural and social conventions in the classroom which gave primacy to the individual and individual activity, perceived requesting help as either babyish or seeking to copy another's work, and promoted competition rather than cooperation
5. the restrictions placed on relationships such as the hierarchy of voices, how pupils are grouped, dependency on an adult and the predominance of relating in an authoritative way;
6. the difficulty of the tasks.

These features of the context which possibly hindered collaborative learning then transferred to the intervention and continued to be useful. It was these features which were subverted in an attempt to realise the major themes of and requirements for 'guided participation' and what it was to be actively and collaboratively involved in school literacy practices as can be seen in Chapters 6 and 7. It was necessary to engage in a process of reflection in an attempt to understand the positive and negative dynamics of these features on peer interaction and to form a dynamic and dialectical relationship between the features identified in the initial research (data) and the theory. Categories were therefore being reworked and created as they appear in the subsequent analysis Chapters 6, 7 and 8. In fact Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 illustrate a cycle of intervention. Chapter 5 deals with the 'whole' class session of the Literacy Hour where the teacher controls the discussion on Instructions. Chapter 6 and 7 presents the researcher 'guiding' sessions with the target groups and involves the researcher challenging the restrictive practices found in Chapter 5. Chapter 8 comes full circle again and juxtaposes with Chapter 5 as it features the pupils in an unsupervised session as participants actively presenting their own instructions to a 'real' audience..

In a study which aligns itself with sociocultural, participatory views where learning is situated in the sociocultural and sociohistorical context of an activity it is important to choose a method which draws the researcher back to the context in which the phenomena occurred. Grounded theory does this and also allows for analysing data at a practical and thematic level. However, the study was also interested in 'active' speaking and listening practices and, therefore, a full grounded theory analysis would not facilitate this. Primarily, it was necessary to adopt an analytical framework which permitted specific features of discourse to be examined and therefore discourse analysis was also used in tandem with grounded theory.

'Discourse Analysis.

Grounded theory and thematic analysis is important when the researcher needs to address the important wider issues of context that the specifics discourse analysis might distort. (Fairclough, 1989 and 1992). However, the main intention of the study is to increase an understanding of how talk works to produce the meaning it does. Sequential analysis was considered and rejected as a possible method

because it did not 'fit' the main purpose of the third research: to study collaborative processes in a particular cultural setting. In brief, sequential analysis involves breaking events into smaller units, defining each partner's contribution separately and looking at the impact on one another. Categories of behaviour are later developed consistent with the interactions and their development is seen as accumulative. This, however, seemed to focus on the micro-genetic analyses of talk and to deny the dynamics between individuals and the particular institutional setting as well as being at odds with the socio cultural tradition which sees learning as 'situated' and culturally based.

Critical analysis was also considered as useful as it focused on the literal meanings of utterances (what is actually said) but it also limited the extent of the interpretation. This study recognises the literal meaning of a statement but, just as the study's approach recognises the broader cultural context in which the learning occurs, the analytic approach needed to recognize the broader cultural context of the discourse and its wider function within that culture and not just in the immediate context of the conversation.

This study wanted to stay within the tradition of discourse analysis that Mercer and Wegeriff claim needs to underpin a useful methodology designed to explore collaborative processes. Discourse analysis or discourse psychology grasps the complexity and flux of social interaction: the participants' orientations and voice and the subject positions in these situations. It allowed the researcher to focus on how discourse is constructed and functions and the effect that it has on the audience. Classroom interactions were observed, focusing on the how learning situations encouraged or prevented pupils from choosing, participating, observing, reflecting on, negotiating and sharing ways of knowing and thinking through talk.

Interpretive discourse analytic techniques were used with a particular focus on specific and broader features of the interactive context. In the 'whole' class session observations were made as to who asked the questions and what type of questions were being asked as well as concentrating on the length of pupil answers. A broader picture was offered by presenting a range of contexts for observation and to see whether there was a range of different scripts. This helped to appreciate the wider systems of social history and cultural relations and to attempt at balancing local, institutional and national concerns (the N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour).

Therefore, discourse analysis allowed the researcher to observe the extended history of shared activity embedded in the common, shared practices of the classroom – an area of that studies of collaborative learning have generally neglected: "Collaborating pupils bring to an interaction a history of other experiences that are potentially shared and potentially known to e shared", (Crook, 1999, p. 107). It also enabled the researcher to trace continuities between the pupils' existing ways of interacting and the new ones that were being asked of them to adopt.

Perhaps the concept discourse psychology is more useful here as it goes beyond the linguistic considerations of discourse analysis and embraces the social and psychological dimensions of making meaning both for the individual speaker and for the social groups, communities and cultures of society as a whole. Video-recording and transcribing interactions seemed the most appropriate means of studying the scripts of teacher and pupils and pupils working together when observing whether these scripts facilitated or inhibited 'active' and collaborative learning.

Participation, it is argued, can be seen as dynamically changing according to the people and the synergy of the situation i.e. how individuals participate with others. It is more than this: participation is also influenced by a complex set of educational discourses on ability, gender and, in terms of this study, on the status of pupils as speakers and stake holders of 'valued' knowledge. However, children are not merely at the mercy of these discourses. They are highly skilled at constructing and participating in educational discourses. There is the difficulty of employing static concepts because of this dynamic element and because they are not appropriate to all contexts. It was necessary to create a design that could assess the joint, synergistic effect of the contribution of the person and the environment to his/her development. This gave the child psychological substance and psychological force and led to a multi-methodological approach in order to capture the dialectical relationship between all the factors which affect collaborative learning. Development in this sense transcends deterministic views and is therefore seen as transformation and invites intervention.

In summary the methodology attempted to:

- ✓ provide a 'thick description' of peer interaction in an early years' literacy lesson.
- ✓ be sensitive to process, complexity and flux

- ✓ focus on natural settings
- ✓ be sensitive to context
- ✓ acknowledge the broader social, political and cultural contexts and how these impinge on classroom literacy practices
- ✓ produce findings recognizable to practitioners
- ✓ be internally reflexive
- ✓ focus on social practices and acknowledge that there are different levels of activity in social life
- ✓ be concerned with interpretation, meaning and illumination
- ✓ applaud a range of voices

Research Design.

It is necessary to consider how this theory then translates into practice. This next section will explain the methods used and the modifications deemed necessary during the course of the research.

The analysis of pupils' collaborative activity during the unsupervised session of the Literacy Hour sought to investigate the social dynamics of peer group collaboration. Three things were required from the method. An appreciation of:

1. the dynamic process of teaching and learning;
2. teaching and learning as embedded and situated in a sociohistorical and sociocultural context and
3. the construction and reconstruction of developing learning systems.

The analysis method was required to capture the intersubjective nature and the social processes of peer collaborative learning. The facilitating and inhibiting features of the context, discourse and relationships of peer interactive were considered. As stated in Chapter 1 the method was informed by ideas from sociocultural perspectives to teaching, learning and interaction, (Rogoff, 1990, Cole, 1996 and Wertsch, 1991). It soon became apparent that a flexible methodology was required. Different stages of the project design had diverse purposes and the methodology needed to be sympathetic to the slow unfolding of a new way of working so consequently, and as stated earlier, the approach adopted by this study was a hybrid approach borrowing from action research, discourse analysis and grounded theory.

To explain this in more detail, initially the study had to determine whether peer interaction took place during the unsupervised time in the Literacy Hour, (Question 1). This involved the researcher adopting the role of a 'non-participant observer', concerned with what the children did, how they engaged with the task, how they behaved and how they talked. These uninterrupted verbal exchanges between peers were video-recorded, (see Chapter 4). Discourse analysis was applied as it was useful in terms of investigating the purpose and effects of pupils' utterances on peer collaborative learning, (see section 3.3.2. and Appendix 1, Example 1). Discourse analysis was seen as useful as it could focus on three important analytical dimensions: the presentation of the text, the nature of the relationships and the social conventions or 'ground' rules implicit in the discourse. The second phase and second research question required the researcher to observe a wider set of language practices during the Literacy Hour to determine how these facilitated or inhibited peer interactive talk, (Chapter 5). Again the researcher video-recorded the exchanges and conducted the observations as a 'non-participant'. The transcripts have a different format at this stage when it became obvious that constructing peer interactions would evolve slowly. The transcripts in Chapter 5 are presented differently in an attempt to guide the participation of the teacher in the research process, (see sections 3.2.3. and 3.4.4. and Appendix 1, Example 3). The third phase which addressed the third and final research question involved the researcher taking an increasing participatory role in the classroom and adopting an interventionist stance, (see Chapters 6 and 7). Grounded theory was applied at this stage in a concern to identify those features of the cultural context which inhibited (Chapter 6) and facilitated (Chapter 7) peer collaborative learning (see Appendix 1, Example 4). The exchanges were still video-recorded but the researcher became an 'active' participant in the process and required a method with a mechanism which would facilitate a process of reflection and sustain a continuously constructed and reconstructed cycle of intervention to encourage peer interactive learning. Action Research seemed to be the most useful methodological solution here, (see section 3.2.2. and Chapters 6 and 7). In Chapter 8, the study came full circle, as it addressed the first research question again, post intervention. The researcher took a less intrusive role and peer interactions were videotaped and transcribed. Discourse analysis was applied again to monitor the changes in text constructions, social conventions and relationships, (see Appendix 1, Example 5). Finally the students were requested to record their thoughts and feelings about each stage of the Literacy Hour on a structured assessment sheet (see section 3.4.4. and Appendix 2). Quantitative methods would not have been able to explain the diversities of the social context i.e. the different educational events and activities. Each phase of the design had to 'fit' the particular contexts,

and the varying constraints and requirements. In fact, although the importance of Discourse Analysis in investigating verbal language and Grounded Theory in highlighting facilitating and inhibiting features of the context have been treated separately, it is recognized that they are intertwined. In actuality context and discourse can not be separated since they are dialectically related.

The Setting.

The study was conducted in a Roman Catholic Primary School. The school had 7 classes with approximately 200 pupils on roll. 1.4 percent were eligible for free school meals. Pupils speaking English as an additional language was 0.5 percent. Those children identified as having special educational needs, including statements was 16.4 percent.

The Participants.

The investigation involved a small number of participants typical of case study research. The class under observation comprised of 29 Year 2 pupils, 14 boys and 15 girls. They were a young class with 4 winter, 9 spring and 16 summer intakes. The teacher was KS1 Coordinator with responsibility for I.C.T., the Library and K.S.1 SATs. There teacher worked on her own without a full-time teacher assistant.

The specific target groups were the 'more' and 'less' able groups. The teacher arranged them in groups according to ability for Literacy. The 'more' able group comprised of 6 pupils, 3 girls and 3 boys. The 'less' able group changed in the course of the study. It initially comprised of 4 pupils, all boys. 3 had I.E.P.'s. One boy was transferred to a Special School. The replacement group comprised of 4 pupils, 2 girls and 2 boys. They were 'the next group up' from the special needs group.

The Researcher.

The researcher spent ten years as a secondary modern teacher of English and subsequently retrained as a Primary teacher in 2001 –2002. She has been a full-time mother of two for nine years and during these years has studied for seven years, worked as a voluntary parent helper at the school for over five years and as an elected Parent Governor for four years.

Over the three years of the research the researcher visited the classroom to work with the 'less' and

'more' able groups and to record the unsupervised and 'whole class' sessions. The researcher also took whole class sessions for Circle Time and Show 'n' Tell. The children were familiar with the switch in roles. Furthermore it allowed the researcher to see the target groups in various situations and in different moods.

Methods of Data Collection.

The study was designed to be conducted in two distinct phases. The first involved a pilot study in Year 1 (Chapter4) and the main study set in Year 2 (Chapters 5,6,7, and 8) with the same children but different class teacher. Each phase was designed to help develop an understanding of how the Literacy Hour was impacting on teacher led discussions and on peer interactions.

The Pilot study was conducted during the academic year 2000 – 2001. It entailed a detailed examination of the whole class session of the Literacy Hour and of the unsupervised time with the 'less' able and 'more' able' groups. Each data collection session of the pupils' activity was videotaped as a whole and supplemented with the researcher's field notes. The pilot was designed to answer the research question of whether children work collaboratively during the unsupervised time of the Literacy Hour. It was also trialling out the method of non-participant observation and evaluating the appropriateness of field notes and transcripts for collecting data on interactions in the classroom.

The main study's original intention was to video the whole class and the unsupervised sessions for the 'less' and 'more' able group respectively in the first term. It soon became apparent that the major finding from the pilot study that children did not cooperate automatically when left to work unsupervised had not altered. This necessitated a wider view of classroom interaction and relationships before the cultural climate of a classroom could be influenced. This was a slow process and so the decision was made that another data collection period for observing the unsupervised time would be postponed until March. The timing was tight as the researcher agreed to withdraw from the classroom once the SATs were underway at the end of April and the beginning of May. The first, autumn/winter term was spent working with the teacher and observing how she encouraged the children to work together. The negotiation of 'ground rules' during Circle Time was recorded with a video camera and later transcribed. It involved 5 sessions each lasting about 15 – 20 minutes which was a total of approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes of tape. Circle Time seemed an acceptable forum to discuss

personal and social issues affecting relationships and affirmed the need for a planned and well thought out program of social education to assist positive working relationships in the classroom. An interesting finding was that the teacher felt unable to do this during the Literacy Hour. This led to the observation of the Literacy Hour. 'Whole' class interactions during literacy were videotaped and then transcribed as play scripts. The format of the scripts was different from the Initial Study, as there were three columns: the names, the utterance and gestures and the researcher's and space for the teacher's commentary. They were handed to the teacher in the spirit of 'guided participation' as mentioned earlier and in the interests of respondent validation.

The observations and findings made during the Pilot study were affirmed: teacher dialogue limited the pupils' responses during these sessions. Interactions observed during the Literacy Hour, Show 'n' Tell, and Circle Time were compared and contrasted. 3 sessions lasting approximately 10 – 15 minutes were recorded and transcribed which was an approximate total of 45 minutes.

The penultimate phase involved the researcher working with the target groups during the Literacy Hour and trying to transfer some of these strategies to the 'guided' reading/writing/oracy sessions. The context of the research became important here. Students were encouraged to work in pairs or threes. Generally the pairs and threes worked with similar abilities (determined by the class teacher) and uniform gender. The pairs and threes changed towards the end of the project when the researcher encouraged the children to work with others and adopt different roles. Interactions were recorded but unlike the previous data collection periods, the researcher assumed a participatory role. However, towards the end of this phase and before the SATs the target groups were video-recorded as unsupervised groups by the researcher who assumed a non-participatory role. These data would be scrutinised for evidence that the 'taught' strategies had been incorporated into the children's repertoire of behaviours.

At the end of the study pupils were encouraged to work in situations which advocated learning as:

1. an open ended activity
2. a participatory process
3. a social activity

4. facilitated by speaking and listening processes which encourage joint meaning-making and sharing expertise (not always by the teacher)
5. an opportunity to reflect on work
6. the opportunity to meaningfully in tasks in an attempt to promote motivation, engagement, participation
7. a collaborative activity which promotes caring and valuing oneself and others.

The last phase was at the end of the Spring term where interviews were conducted with the pupils from each target group. Each group was asked in an informal way on an ad hoc basis during a normal literacy lesson what they thought and felt about working on their own or in supportive peer groups. Each child was then asked to record their thoughts and feelings about each stage of the Literacy Hour on a structured assessment sheet (see Appendix 2). The reason for this was to acquire their story and to address respondent validation.

Ethics.

Permission was sought from the school and from the parents to carry out the observations and video the children for the study. The researcher promised confidentiality, anonymity (as far as possible) and to destroy the data after the completion of the proposed study.

Of overall importance was the welfare of the participants. The research practices sought not to contravene mutual concerns with respecting the mental health, values, attitudes and self-worth of the participants. Furthermore the study aimed not to be exploitative and welcomed other perspectives and regular opportunities to discuss data and findings with the teacher(s) involved. This reduced the possibility that the project was too one – sided. Furthermore, it was hoped that the discussions, if carefully handled, might empower the teacher especially in the light of practice that might cause her concern.

In addition, the introduction of discussions with pupil participants was a way of valuing their experience of the study. It was hoped that it would make them more critical of their educational experience. In a final bid not to be exploitative the researcher volunteered to help in the day-to-day

running of the classroom in a gesture of gratitude and as an indication that the researcher appreciated the restraints and demands on the teacher.

Strengths and Weaknesses.

One of the strengths of this research programme is that the researcher has been present with the pupils for nearly two years and this resulted in a sensitivity to the learning context and to keeping the situation as natural as possible. However during the transition from year 1 to year 2 the teacher had changed and in hind sight continuity with the teacher was important as it takes time to build a trusting and mutually supportive relationship with another professional. In addition the time on this project could be extended as the transformation of cultural practices is a slow process.

The draw back of using such a small sample was that there is not a sound basis for making empirical generalisations. The strength was that a more detailed picture of interaction can be presented. The methods of data collection (self assessment sheets, transcripts and ad hoc conversations) and the role of participant researcher also encouraged interactive dialogue between researcher and participants. These voices inevitably enriched the study.

The researcher's role was the most difficult thing to manage as there was a constant change from participant to non-participant role. Non-participant observation was very difficult to sustain especially in an early years classroom because the pupils expected the adult to be on hand to help. However, non-participant observation was important so that the researcher could stand back and observe the teacher led discussion as it happened. When the pupils were dispersed into groups during the initiative then it was necessary to adopt a participant role as it afforded the opportunity to influence the proceedings and gain a greater insight into the pupils' behaviour.

It was inevitable that the researcher affected the behaviour of the participants. The teacher, aware of the researcher's agenda, constantly made reference to the transition of skills to unsupervised time and the pupils (who were used to being helped when divided into groups) were disconcerted when they were being filmed. However, the researcher was seen more as a parent helper by both pupils and the class teacher which had the advantage of the children behaving naturally but led to difficulties in the free flow

of dialogue between practitioner and researcher. The researcher is the most complex instrument of the research process. The role made demands on the researcher's interpersonal skills, on maintaining rapport with the participants, on being unobtrusive and yet, affecting the climate when necessary, on actively scanning and listening and on recording.

Transcripts were chosen as the main way of recording interactions. Inevitably the process of constructing dialogues through transcripts precluded the researcher's influence as even transcripts involve inference (Ochs, 1979, Atkinson, 1992). A system of three columns was adopted: One with the participants' names, one for the dialogue and the last one for the commentary. In hind sight it might be necessary to change this to four. A last column needed to be included for the inclusion of participants' responses and voices. The use of transcripts also grounds the study and makes them recognizable to other teachers which is important when a researcher is tying to 'guide' the participation of the practitioner in the research process.

The method of recording interactions was by the video recorder. This seemed to afford the opportunity to see things as they happened. It allowed for a constant replay and focus on otherwise lost behaviour. However, it was more intrusive and caused more reactivity.

The method of triangulation worked reasonably well. Triangulation was achieved on three levels. The first level involved the participants: the researcher, the pupils and the teacher. The second level was achieved on the choice of methods: transcripts, field notes, documents and pupil self-assessment sheets, and the last level addressed the concern for achieving a multi-layered context. A variety of situations was observed: the Literacy Hour, Circle Time, Show 'n' Tell and collaborative time during History. The last method of triangulation was achieved by the different levels of meaning: the knowledge acquired, the relationships, the position of the individual etc. These will be discussed again during the evaluation.

Conclusion.

Qualitative research of the kind reported in this study is valuable as it articulates people's intersubjective experience, including the researcher's who fully acknowledges the difficulties of conducting research in the classroom. The findings, therefore, should be recognisable to participants with similar experiences

in the school and research communities (the findings will be presented in the next chapter) and the discourse will be meaningful as it is in context.

However, there are other criteria over and beyond 'respondent' validity: The study has also to present a picture of general significance and that is why a discussion of national models of literacy such as the Literacy Hour will have wider relevance. In addition, the project has to be persuasive and this might be assisted by the study's aim of presenting a dialectical relationship between theory and practice.

Furthermore, the research should generate new, believable and insightful analysis. In the past research on peer interaction has tended to be preoccupied mainly with cognition. The line of research reported upon in this study adds to contemporary understanding of peer interacting minds by moving towards focusing on the 'situated' nature and affective dimension of collaboration during school literacy practices.

Thus, the main study is looking at this process of 'guided participation' for all participants and at the restraints placed on pupils, teachers and researchers as they attempt to engage in the language and culture of 'guided participation'. The outcome is not important. The research is not designed to provide solutions just insights. In fact it might only supply the beginning of an argument which needs developing in other contexts at other times. The process of gauging the appropriate mediational means which can encourage participation in collaborative learning in the classroom is of more interest. The researcher's concern is not the competence or incompetence of a child, teacher or researcher. The over riding aim is to look at children, teachers and researchers in context and understand how these situations support or constrain them. Part of this situation is the social relationships that these participants experience. However the pupils' experiences are fundamental as these form the basis of a pupil's understanding of the discourses which prevail on what it means to succeed and fail at literacy tasks. Perhaps it will be just as an important to look at factors contributing to disengagement. If this project can contribute in some small way to enable teachers and researchers to motivate children to learn and succeed at educational tasks then it will have fulfilled its aims. This study feels that it can be usefully explored through peer interaction and a planned curriculum of speaking and listening. These are rewarding and valuable and might help to develop certain forms of thinking, behaving and acting without deference to authority. It is an ideal but an ideal worth pursuing as it treats the child with respect.

Chapter 4.

A Pilot Study of the Unsupervised Time During the Literacy Hour.

Introduction.

The analysis is organised under four Chapters. Chapter 4 provides a brief overview of the findings from the pilot study in which observations were conducted as to whether children collaborated during the unsupervised time of the Literacy Hour. Initially the pilot phase observed whether pupils worked together 'naturally' in peer groups. The findings were that children did not automatically co–operate in work groups. This went part way to discovering whether children are monitored and supported to take an active part in their own and other's learning during the unsupervised work. These findings then impacted upon the second phase of the study (see Chapter 5) where the 'whole' class sessions were observed in an attempt to discover whether teacher/pupil interactions prepared pupils to engage in mutual ways of learning. This considered whether the teacher directed 'whole' class and 'guided' sessions facilitated mutual learning. Different 'whole' class contexts (the Literacy Hour, Show 'n' Tell and Circle Time) were observed to discover how the social processes of interaction were impeded or facilitated by the different set-ups. Attention was paid to the nature of the relationships, the discourse and the task. Chapters 6 and 7 deal with the implementation of an initiative to encourage mutual learning in peer groups during the unsupervised time and finally, Chapter 8 comes full circle again as the unsupervised groups featuring in Chapter 4 are observed again to see whether there is evidence that the 'taught' strategies had been incorporated into the children's repertoire of behaviours.

The next section will look at the obstacles in the classroom that impede group work. Discourse analysis is used to study how groups of pupils construct talk together as the wider context was not considered at this point.

Over reliance on the teacher.

The N.L.S. encourages the teacher to set up alternative resources so that for the 20 minute unsupervised work pupils "do not interrupt the teacher". This is a tall order for the Early Years but nevertheless the teachers in the infant classrooms under observation aimed to make their pupils independent. The children soon joined the chorus of "I can do that myself!" They associated doing things for themselves

as being grown up and receiving help as being babyish. To accelerate their independence teachers tended to aim resources at an individual level as seen in Extract 1.

Extract 1: Resources for individuals.

Teacher: O.K., use your word-books and word lists. Try spellings for yourself and the story-board on the board.

Each child was given a word book in which they asked an adult to write a spelling. They were encouraged to try out spellings for themselves and they were assisted by posters on the wall with common words. These were strategies which individual pupils could utilise. The story-board was placed on a board next to the teacher's chair. It was a framework which detailed characters, places and events in the story. The teacher would use the framework to model the answer elicited from the children during the whole class session. The teacher provided the text, an example of which can be seen in Extract 2.

Extract 2: Text on the White Board.

My grandma has white hair and blue eyes. I like to play with my lorry with Grandma. My grandfather has white hair and blue eyes. He has a hat. He plays with me.

During the unsupervised session the pupils would refer back to this text, some becoming heavily dependent on what was written on the board.

A group was observed for six minutes and during this time they were rarely at their table. They left the table and spent time queuing by the teacher with their word-books for spellings despite being encouraged to use the magic line which substituted letters and in opposition to the Literacy Framework which states that pupils in unsupervised groups should not interrupt the teacher. Other pupils sat in front of the board and copied the teacher's model answer which again illustrated the pupils over reliance on the teacher.

The following extract illustrates this over dependence on the teacher and on the text which featured in Extract 2.

Extract 3: Over dependence on the text.

Start of twenty-minute observation.

Pupil H.S.: *(mouths to herself)* My grandmo…mum…mother.

(Leaves for sharper pencil.)

(Time passes...)

Pupil H.S.: *(returns)* My grandmother has wh… (Rubs out and looks at board.)

(Time passes...)

Pupil H.S.: *(asking Pupil C1)* Does that say my mum or grandmother?

Pupil C.H: *(looks at H's book)* Do you want me to check the word?

(Stands and looks at book)

Pupil H.S.: I know what it says: Grandmother Mum! *(Laughter from H.S. and continues to rub out.)*

(Time passes...)

Pupil H.S.: My grandmo… moth…mo… *(Looks to C.)* Can I have the rubber?

(Time passes...)

Pupil H.S.: *(shouts)* I can't read this! *(Referring to own work and rubbing out).*

End of twenty-minute session. Pan into work: "Gran grandn".

"Gran grandn…" is the culmination of the pupil's efforts during a twenty-minute session. The teacher was unhappy about this over dependence on her words. She remonstrated with the pupil: "I want to see your own work not mine." Rather than being facilitative, the teacher's contribution on the board limited the pupil. Perhaps this signals the importance of an alternative resource such as encouraging rapport with fellow pupils, which happened in part when Pupil C1 said "Do you want me to check the word?" However, pupil H did not know how to make full use of this support or felt, perhaps, that help would be problematic or inappropriate as 'guidance' was normally given by an adult.

Mutual Learning Between Peers.

The classroom resources offered to individuals are not in – line with mutual learning theories which emphasise the social processes of development. Mutual learning theory would encourage children to talk through their work and to listen to others' contributions. It would encourage children to seek and give explanations, to share and to value contributions and to seek consensus. In some senses Mercer's ideal type of 'exploratory' talk encourages this collaborative process. However this project decided to look for evidence that children did, spontaneously, exploit the social resources provided by their peers.

The concepts of 'disputational', 'cumulative' and 'explorative' talk were not used from Mercer, Wegerif and Dawes (2000) to characterise the talk of young children working together in unsupervised groups because much of the talk was off task and they did not seem to capture what young children were doing or what was both good and problematic about it. Therefore the analysis will try to characterise good talk and bad talk. One important theme will be the way pupils manage themselves and the group. Children's on task talk often resorts to mimicking what they see as salient teacher behaviour. The dominant style of interacting strengthens the rationale for the intervention discussed in Chapter 5,6 and 7.

Two unsupervised sessions were observed in an attempt to discover how pupils talked together and whether they used language in a joint activity. There seemed to be frequent episodes of off-task talk in both 'less' and 'more' able groups.

Off-task talk.

Extract 4: The 'more' able group.

Pupil E.J.: *(returning to place, writing in book and mouthing)* W..u.i.t.

(C.H. rocking T.G. playing with a pencil.)

Pupil E.J.: *(sucking pencil)* White! Anyway D., I've got full stops in this book! *(Looking at book that she'd been asked to put away at the beginning of the lesson.)*

Pupil E.J.: You haven't read it, I have!

Pupil D.: I have read that book.

Pupil E.J.: You haven't!

Pupil D.: I have! You can't read it!

Pupil E.J.: I can! I can read it … 'has' … 'also' … 'picked' …See!

Here's the picture. The Three Bears. *(Looking and pointing at the front cover.)*

The above passage is typical of the sort of negative behaviour and talk found in poorly managed group work amongst children in the early years. It was uncooperative and competitive with the cycles of assertion and counter assertion between Pupil E.J. and Pupil D.: "Pupil E.J.: You haven't read it, I have! Pupil D.: I have read that book. Pupil E.J.: You haven't! Pupil D.: I have! You can't read it!" The interaction was off-task and fraught with conflict. Underlying this conversation was a genuine inclination to establish superior status and the pupils perceived this as being achieved by looking knowledgeable and using the terms of 'experts' such as full stops.

There were also examples of pupils being reluctant or unable to offer help or assistance.

Extract 5: "I don't know, don't ask me" - the 'less' able group.

Pupil C.F.: Mee…*(looking at E. and sounding out)* Is that right?

Pupil E. K.: I don't know, don't ask me.

Pupil A.M.: *(shouts)* Ask me! Ask me! I'm using the magic line.

Teacher: *(cuts in)* Good A.M.

Time passes...

Pupil C.F.: *(reading to himself)* Dear Mary, I love you very much.

(Looks to E.K. but she is picking up a rubber from the floor.) Did you hear that? *(Raises his eyebrows at M.D.)*

Pupil E. K.: I didn't.

Pupil C.F.: *(he starts again)* Dear Mary…*(A.H. moves. E.K. dives under the Table again)* Oi E., just because you don't want to hear it.

Pupil E.K.: Stop it, C.F.!

(A.M. moves nearer to C.F. and E.K. leaves)

Pupil C.F. was looking to E.K. for assistance. The latter promptly refused help: "E.K.: I don't know, don't ask me." Later in the sequence pupil E.K. avoided listening to C.F.'s work. However, this raises

three valuable points. The first is the importance of the pupils' perceptions in these situations as E.K. might construe C.F.'s reading out loud as showing off. Secondly, it might just be that the two contesting pupils do not 'get on'. This is a reminder of the importance of personal and social factors in learning relationships in the classroom.

Thirdly, the children do not seem capable of managing their work without supervision. There is a good deal of off-task talk and very little work actually being completed or engaged with. The children are easily distracted and often the work seems too difficult for them to complete. If this is the case they are hardly being empowered to help someone else and pupil E.K.'s statement: "I don't know, don't ask me" might simply be a statement of fact.

Cooperative behaviour.

There were few examples of cooperative talk especially during those times which involved the actual completion of a task. Children were able to build on contributions in an encouraging and mutually supportive and uncritical way but the instances were fleeting and were often of a personal and practical nature like helping to rub out or finding a missing item.

Extract 6: Cooperative behaviour in the 'more' able group.

Pupil D.: (*crying and looking at pencil case.)*

Pupil E.J.: What's the matter? *(D. whispers to E.J.)*

Pupil E.D.: What's the matter D.?

Pupil E.J.: He can't find his word-book.

(E.D. looks on her table.)

Pupil E.J.: I'll go and find it.

(Pupil Cy. cuddles him.)

Pupil E.D.: It was in our table. Here! Here!

Pupil T.G.: On my table, not in.

Pupil D's word-book was important as it was supposed to sustain D. as an individual. Curiously E.J. and D. were the same pupils who were in dispute over The Three Bears in Extract 4. Here there was

greater willingness for E.J. and E.D. to cooperate perhaps in an area that they felt better equipped to help. Perhaps it illustrates the contradictory behaviour of the teacher/assistants whom the pupils imitate. Sometimes the children are nurtured and at other times they are spoken to negatively. Perhaps in terms of their work negative behaviour dominates as the last remark illustrates. Pupils E.J., E.D. ad Cy were caring for Pupil D. However pupil T.G. still found the opportunity to give a lesson on language even though it was unrelated to the task content: "On my table, not in." The difficulty is to 'bridge' personal and social issues with the task at hand.

Reassurance was also offered on work as shown in Extract 7.

Extract 7: Cooperative behaviour in the 'less' able group',

(C.F. looks across to A.H.'s work)

Pupil C.F.: What's that one? *(A.H. pauses)* You've done a mistake ain't you

A.H.

Pupil A.H.: *(looks to C.F.)* Yeah.

Pupil C.F.: Anyway…

Pupil A.H.: And you did a mistake too didn't you C.F.

Pupil C.F.: Yeah, don't matter.

Pupil A.H.: (shaking head) It doesn't matter C.F. does it?

Pupil C.F.: Nooo…

Although practical help was not offered in the sense of correcting the mistake, this was a good example of Rogoff's term 'bridging'. This extract does convey the gentle tone of the words spoken by the two pupils and can not do justice to the understanding that the researcher had of these pupils. Both admit their weaknesses (spelling errors) without being defensive and they try to offer each other mutual support in an attempt to keep themselves robust and so that mistakes do not take on too much magnitude.

The children's dialogue often tried to maintain equality. Extract 4 involved children talking about the book that Pupil E.J. was claiming that Pupil D could not read. Pupil D was keen to assert their equal status/ability with the other child who owned the book. In Extract 7 one child undermines the other by

flagging a mistake in their work which is countered by the other child who points out that the other child has also made a mistake.

Glimpses of 'guided participation'.

There were no examples of the sort of 'guided participation' as defined in Chapters 1 and 2. Even in the fleeting instances where children worked together concentration broke.

Extract 8: Glimpses of 'guided participation' in the 'more' able group.

Cut to C.R and T.G. T.G. looking at C.R.'s word-book.

Pupil T.G.: Grandmother…

Pupil C.R.: *(looking at book and pointing to words with her pencil. T.G. listening)* My grandmother has blue eyes and she takes me for a …*(leans back and T.G. looks to her and smiles. C.R moves forward and resumes work.)*

Full stop!

(C.R. moves towards T.G.'s work and C.R. points with her pencil to T.G.'s work.)

Pupil C.R.: My grandmother…

(T.G. continues to read.)

Pupil H.S: *(shouts)* I can't read this! *(Referring to her work.)*

(C.R loses concentration. Chair falls over and she turns to pick it up. T.G. continues to read to herself.)

There was a brief episode where T.G. and C.R. were locked in a reading and writing activity. One read whilst the other listened and the roles were reversed. C.R. pointed with her pencil to help T.G. read the words. There was an instance of sensitivity and encouragement when T.G. smiled at C.R. and again could be seen a mimicking the teacher, which is reminiscent of the behaviour found by Rogoff in the study of mother and infant dyads in the domestic arena. However, these moments were transient and not sustained.

On other occasions pupils were able to offer help on work but there was an over reliance on one of the

partners as seen in Extract 9.

Extract 9: Glimpses of 'guided participation' in the 'less' able group.

(A.M. moves towards C.F. He looks at C.F.'s work.)

Pupil A.M.: Can you put Dear Mary down for me.

(C.F. moves towards A.M.'s book. As C.F. writes he looks up into A.M.'s face. A.M. looks on.)

Pupil A.M. *(...)* calendar *(...)* open.

Pupil C.F.: Yeah.

Pupil A.M.: Number three.

Pupil C.F.: Number two. I've opened number one.

(C.F. still writing for A.M. A.M. looking at Advent Calendar on wall).

Pupil C.F.: *(sounding out)* Mary I love you very much. Full stop. Alex, what do you think of that? *(A.M. looks away from advent back to his book.)*

Pupil A.M.: (...)

Pupil C.F.: You're done!

Pupil A.M.: Have I done it? *(Holds up book in front of face.)*

Pupil C.F.: *(taps book)* Not yet. You need to do a picture now. You need to draw a picture.

(A.M. puts book down and C.F. looks into the camera) I've done some of A.M.'s He's gonna do good, hey!?

This is a case of some serious over reliance of one pupil to another. C.F. took full responsibility for the task but not for the 'guidance'. The dependent relationship between C.F. and A.M. might be imitating teaching and learning practices in the home or in school. One can only applaud C.F.'s helpfulness and willingness to see someone else 'do good' especially in the light of the blocking strategies used in 'disputational' talk.

However, there is a definite disparity in status and ability here which might be related to the difficulty of the task for this age group. The task itself does not lend itself to group work as the resources are aimed at

individuals and the tasks are to be completed by individuals. As a result this might explain why, when children are talking, they are not talking about the work. This strengthens the case for children being 'guided' on how to work together in a mutual way.

There were occasions when a group could orchestrate its efforts as illustrated in the next extract.

Extract 10: A joint effort!

Pupil H.S.: Can I have the rubber? *(asks D. who is a boy).*

Pupil T.G.: He might not let us.

Pupil E.J.: We're going to keep it from the boys.

Pupil H.S.: We're going to keep it!

Pupil D.: No! Give me it!

Pupil E.J.: *(pulling face)* O.K!

Pupil D.: I'm going to keep it!

Pupil E.J.: I've got one in my pencil case, anyway.

Pupil C.H.: And I have.

Pupil T.G.: I've got a Barbie one...

Pupil C.H.: …and I have…

Pupil E.J.: …and none of you boys will be able to use 'em, just girls on this table.

(She points to the boys) Not you or you!

(D. moves away).

Pupil C.H. *(looks to T.G.)* Look at all your rubbers!

(T. holds two rubbers that she has hidden from D.)

Pupil E.J.: *(looking over by the teacher)* D.'s at the back of the queue. You're going to have to keep it for a long time because he's at the back of the queue.

Pupil H.S.: *(passing a rubber)* You can have another one; I've got this one.

Again the pupils are off–task. However, it is an interesting example of how four girls can orchestrate their efforts to one common aim: to prevent the boys using the rubber. It was the only occasion when

their sentences seemed to be joined by one voice: "I've got a Barbie one...Pupil C.H.: ...and I have...Pupil E.J.: ...and none of you boys will be able to use 'em, just girls on this table." Their behaviors were coordinated towards one common purpose. It gives an indication that pupils can be united by a common purpose and coordinate their behaviours. Pupil T said very little but she hid the rubbers from the boys' view. There are issues here seem to be salient to children's identity as co-workers – gender. However this is not the focus of this particular study.

Conclusion.

The main finding was that children found working unsupervised difficult. The teacher was still in demand which rarely left her uninterrupted with a 'guided' group. In the absence of the teacher the unsupervised groups showed an over dependence on her by copying the teacher's written words on the board. Resources were provided at an individual level which might contribute to the notion of school work as individual rather than a collaborative activity and is, perhaps, consistent with a notion that prioritises individual attainment over collaborative processes. However, once children were left to work unsupervised they were unable to sustain working independently. Independence was seen as working alone and not as working in small collaborative groups. Pupils strove to work as individuals and saw success as coping on their own. In common with Bennet and Dunne's (1992) findings the children were grouped but did not collaborate as a group.

Much of the work was off – task and the off-task conversations were highly competitive and characterised by assertions and counter assertions in a battle to keep ahead. However, there were fleeting instances of children locked in conversation and offering each other help and encouragement. These were not dependent on ability. These exchanges were reminiscent of 'guided participation' where one of the pairs took a nurturing role and encouraged with kind words or a smile. However, even in these instances there was often an over dependence of one pupil on the other. Pupils were also able to coordinate their efforts and behaviours in a larger group albeit off – task. On these occasions pupils were united on a common purpose or aim although not always to laudable ends. During these exchanges pupils were often heard exclaiming a general rule by which the group should abide. This gives a clear indication that children can potentially operate and enforce rules.

Therefore, children are capable of asking questions and challenging and are also capable of supporting each other. However, it seems that they need to be encouraged, 'guided' or trained to develop social ways of thinking and supporting each other. They need to work collaboratively and not competitively. This signals a clear role for teachers to take the responsibility to pool the mental resources of the classroom and to negotiate a set of 'ground rules' that will empower the children and the teacher. The teacher has a clear role in modeling and facilitating the social processes of mutual learning in the hope that the pupils will imitate these practices. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5.

'Whole' Class Sessions During the Literacy Hour, Circle Time and Show 'n' Tell.

Introduction.

The preceding chapter suggested that the early years children in the study were unable to collaborate effectively on literacy tasks, although they showed some potential to working effectively together in their "off task" activities. This chapter will offer a discourse analysis of extracts from transcripts of 'whole' class sessions during the Literacy Hour, Circle Time and Show 'n' Tell as well as a thematic analysis which extends and makes more explicit the main theme of 'guided participation'. The N.L.S. has championed the 'whole' class sessions claiming that this type of direct teaching makes more effective use of teacher contact with pupils. If the time structure of the Literacy Hour is followed some pupils may be directed by a teacher during the 'whole' class and 'guided' sessions for 80 - 100 percent of the time others about 67 percent of the time. This study's concern was to examine 'whole' class teaching in an attempt to uncover whether the teacher creates a culture of 'mutual construction of knowledge' by establishing ground rules for working together and how this is managed.

This led to looking beyond the 'whole' class session of the Literacy Hour. Circle Time and Show 'n' Tell were allotted a 15-30 minute period at the end of an afternoon. During Circle Time the teacher would introduce 'whole' class activities which would aim to encourage children to listen, concentrate, take turns and respect others. Show 'n' Tell involved pupils bringing in an object from home which was relevant to the topics studied in school. The children were invited to talk about their objects and to manage questions from the audience.

The dialogue between the pupils and the teacher became important in discovering whether knowledge was mutually constructed between teachers and pupils during the 'whole' class and 'guided' sessions and whether pupils were encouraged to mutually construct knowledge with their peers. There was also a concern as to whether pupils acquired 'ritual' or 'principled' knowledge, (Edwards and Mercer, 1987).

As noted in the previous chapters creating layers of context was important to this study. The study took account of three levels of context and their influence on class interactions:

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1. The immediate context of the classroom.
2. The whole school context.
3. The wider influences of initiatives and directives from Government e.g. the National Literacy Strategy and the Literacy Hour.

Features of the context were explored by using 'grounded theory' and were treated under the core theme of cultural restrictions on collaborative activity. However, a full 'grounded theory' was not presented; it extended and supported the predominant use of discourse analysis.

At classroom level, discourse analysis allowed the researcher to explore how the teacher arranged for 'guided participation' or mutually constructed knowledge. Three features became important.

1. The presentation of the text.
2. The nature of the relationships.
3. The social conventions or 'ground' rules.

At an institutional level the school was aware that the personal, social and cognitive development of pupils needed attention. This was reinforced in an OFSTED inspection and became part of an Action Plan: "To fine tune the extent to which pupils are guided towards a greater understanding of and involvement in their own academic and personal development". However, it was not clear as to what extent the school saw personal, social and cognitive development as interconnected.

At a classroom level consideration was also given to how the Literacy Hour affected the culture of the classroom and whether it facilitated language being perceived as social practice.

<u>The 'Whole' Class Session During the Literacy Hour and Learning as Mutually Constructed.</u>

<u>The nature of the relationships.</u>

The nature of the relationships between teacher and pupils during the Literacy Hour is such that the teacher is positioned as the expert. This establishes an asymmetrical relationship between teacher and pupils and is not typical of relationships between adult and children where knowledge is mutually constructed, (Rogoff, 1990). In the latter, roles are more symmetrical in the sense that the child assumes a more active role during the interaction.

The Position of Voice in Relationships:

Despite recommendations that the 'whole' class session should be interactive and offer opportunities for "high levels of motivation and active engagement for pupils", (page 8, The National Literacy Strategy, DfEE, 1998), the first 30 minutes seem a time when the pupils listen and the teacher speaks. This is borne out in Extract 11:

Extract 11: "This is my time for talking and your time for listening",

> Teacher: Shh! There's a lot of chatting going on. There's a lot of chatting and calling out. Shall we try and listen carefully… This is my time for talking and your time for listening, I need you to listen first. Sit comfortably and hands in lap!

The children's talk was denigrated by referring to it as mere 'chatting'. The use of 'we' is a deception. The teacher used 'we' in a polite request for the pupils to be quiet. The most important voice was that of the teacher's. In one Literacy session the teacher spoke for 80 % of the time. Pupils clearly saw their role as listening. In their personal commentaries on the 'whole' class session of the Literacy Hour (see Appendices) they drew speech bubbles with the teacher saying "Listen!", "I can hear someone talking!" and "Are you listening?" Listening was very much a passive act for the children. Pupils, whilst listening to the teacher, were not directed to note features of the teacher's talk. The pupils presented the teacher as being active, telling stories and writing on the board: "I think I might read you a story." In fact some children were aware that directing the 'whole' class session was taxing for the teacher as they provided the teacher with speech bubbles saying: "I think I might lose my voice" and "I'm getting tired."

Pupil interruptions were discouraged. Even during occasions when teacher and pupil dialogue became synchronised such interchanges were restricted.

Extract 12: A 'whole' class session during the Literacy Hour on Instructions.

> Teacher: When you're looking for a sock check that it will fit your hand comfortably. Make sure it is not too big or too small. *If it's too small* it won't fit on your hand and you won't be able to use your puppet.

Pupil K; *...and if it's too big...*

Teacher: *...and if it's too big - K. Will you sit properly on you bottom* - It will flop around on your hand and might slip off.

Pupil K. participated by providing the alternative line of thought to the teacher's preceding sentence by juxtapositioning 'small' with 'big'. However, the same pupil was then reminded to sit in the correct position. The contribution was not met with the genuine encouragement required by a teacher who was interested in facilitating mutually constructed learning. Rather the pupil was checked and reminded who was in authority.

This failure to bridge or connect what was spoken by the teacher and what was heard by the pupils, most significantly establishes a clearly demarcated distance between the teacher and the pupils which is further entrenched by turn – taking. Not only were questions teacher controlled but so were the responses. The teacher had the right to choose the pupils who had put their hands up. A raised hand is a clear visual signal to the teacher that pupils are ready to provide an answer but those pupils have to wait for the teacher to choose them. This establishes a strict turn – taking system which discourages interruptions and confirms the power relationships in the classroom. It also illustrates, perhaps, that pupils might have to display the behaviour of an ideal pupil: "*Will you sit properly on your bottom*" to be selected.

Features of the discourse.

Text as process.

This distance was exacerbated by other features of the pupil and teacher discourse during the Literacy Hour. The teacher controlled the dialogue. Asking questions was very much the prerogative of the teacher. In one extract the teacher asked 18 questions and the children asked none. Out of 18 questions the majority (55%) were questions requiring brief answers which failed to encourage speculation or evaluation. Questions were often rhetorical and did not invite full participation:

Extract 13: A 'whole' class session during the Literacy Hour on Instructions.

Teacher: Let's have a think, let's have a think. Where do we need to put the glue? There are the ears so we need to put some there and put some there.

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Ironically the teacher said "Let's have a think" but it was not a genuine invitation for the class to think together. Rather the children watched as the teacher thought out loud and provided the answer for them. Again this positioned the teacher's voice as dominant. The children did not get the opportunity to rehearse ideas orally which distanced them from the task at hand.

Extract 14: A 'whole' class session during the Literacy Hour on Instructions.

Teacher: What does he (a character in a television program) mean by a tip? E?

Pupil E.W.: It's something that you can do.

Teacher: Yes you're nearly there? E.D.?

Pupil E.D.: Something that you could've done.

Teacher: *Something that you could've done.*

Pupil O: Just a little bit of what you do with the thing that you've made.

Teacher: *Just a little bit of what you do with the thing that you've made* but

When we listen to Tab's Tips they're not always about making things are they.

A?

Pupil A: It's some information.

Teacher: It is. *It's some information*...."

The teacher legitimised what the pupil had said by repeating their answers were, as the italicised text illustrates. It became a guessing game where the pupils had to guess what was in the teacher's head: "Yes, you're nearly there" and then the teacher turned to another pupil signaling that the last response was not 'correct'. There was a constant reinforcement of what was in the teacher's mind and hearing the teacher talk out – loud and providing the answers. Again this reinforces the distance between pupils and teacher but also gives clear messages about the position of the teacher and the pupil in relation to the knowledge. The teacher had ownership of the task as they controlled participation by assuming responsibility for the task in hand.

Extract 15: A 'whole' class session during the Literacy Hour on Instructions.

Teacher... What we'll do is this: I'll call someone up to come and stick them

On...E would you like to come and stick the eyes on for me please. Now

we've already had people who came and marked the position where the eyes

> need to go so that's fine. So, I should think that E.W. you need to put a bit of glue on the sock and there are the position for the eyes. O.K. you can do that.

The teacher determined what should be done. The pupils were not invited to give suggestions or evaluate the 'best' way of doing something. Their involvement was controlled by the teacher and it could be argued so was their thinking. The task was broken down into small stages and pupils were allocated to a task almost like a production line. The pupil was clearly instructed on placing the glue on the sock. The pupil hesitated until they were activated by the words: "O.K. you can do that". Again this placed the teacher in authority over the task. The pupil became a technician dealing with a specific skill. They never fully engaged with the task or experienced the pit – falls which might stimulate thinking.

The teacher was instructing the children about 'appropriate behaviour' and self-management, rather than lesson content. This is the difference between operating at a 'ritual' as opposed to a 'principled' level of knowledge. In addition, the type of behaviour that was encouraged was teacher directed and also individualized. Therefore the difficulty comes when the children are put in groups but have not been given the behavioural patterns that they can use to organise their behaviour effectively in peer group settings. As was shown in Chapter 3 some children assumed the role of the teacher, some reverted to playground behaviour, others worked off task, and a few children found a way of working together although not very skillfully.

<u>Text as resource.</u>

The text was placed on the white board at the beginning of the session and adhered to.

<u>Extract 16: A 'whole' class session during the Literacy Hour on Instructions.</u>

> Teacher: What is the *proper* way to do it? And then later, *You make sure that you do things in the right order. ....Instructions have to be followed through very, very carefully.*

There was no attempt at the class constructing, deconstructing or reconstructing the instructions. There was no encouragement to challenge the text, seek agreement and negotiate a common understanding.

The authority of the 'text' whether the spoken word of the teacher or the written word of the text was not up for dispute.

Extract 17: A 'whole' class session during the Literacy Hour on Instructions.

Teacher: What else are we going to need? (whispers from the class) Ears it said, didn't it. (Whispers from the class)……Do you think I'd be able to do anything now?

Class: Yeah.

Teacher: What?

Pupil J.F.: Take it off!

Teacher: I've only got one hand to use.

Class: I'll do it!

Teacher: That's why you've marked it! That's why you've marked it! So now, you can take the sock off and you can use both hands…

Pupil ?:…to stick on…

Teacher…to stick the different things on. Right after that, *let's look at our next instruction.*

Pupil S: You missed the tongue…

Teacher: Well…

Pupil S:…and you missed the whiskers.

Teacher: Yeah, we can do that later can't we. We can add those details later. *We're following our instructions for the minute.* (The teacher reads instructions and then asks) What does 'and so on' mean? Yes, H?

The pupils' contributions were diminished as mere details: "We can add those details later" which could be attended to as an after thought. The text and the spoken words of the teacher were clearly in authority: "We're following our instructions for the minute" and "let's look at our next instruction". The use of "our" is pertinent as it is questionable as to whether the class feel that they 'own' the instructions. Implicit in such interactions is a hierarchy of voices. The child's voice is positioned below the teacher's (text as process) and the that of the written word (text as resource).

At the end of the session the task of actually making a puppet was given as homework:

Extract 18: Close of 'whole' class session with teacher setting written homework.

Teacher: Now a bit of homework for you then. If you like at home with … if Your Mummy or your Daddy has an old sock. … If anybody would like to have a go at making a sock puppet, bring it in to *show us and on a piece of paper for me, write down your instructions so that it could help somebody else in the class if they wanted to make one.*

The teacher united Literacy and craft and aimed to get the children involved in doing something. The children were to do instructions whilst simultaneously thinking and acting. They were then invited to write them down. In fact the teacher cast them as experts instructing a peer: "…show us and on a piece of paper for me write down your instructions so that it could help somebody else in the class if they wanted to make one." This would give the pupils' a real and wider audience and would go some way to introducing the pupils to a 'principled' understanding of the task. It was an opportunity to encourage the social processes of the classroom but somehow this type of activity seemed difficult to facilitate within the constraints of the Literacy Hour and was left as a non – mandatory task to be completed at home.

This was a difficult task which presented an ideal opportunity for rich oral work in groups. Instead, the children were directed to do this outside of the context of the classroom, on their own or with a carer rather than in a peer group setting. The only way that the children could conceivably complete all the elements of this task (the craft side as well as the written work) was if the carer was heavily contingent on the activity. If this is the case then the children's voice is diminished once again in the hierarchy voices. This task did not actually empower the children because it went far beyond what they could hope to achieve on their own. Ironically, they probably could have done this as a small supportive peer group. This became the intention of the initiative featured in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Social Conventions.

The whole class session reinforced individualistic ways of working and an over dependence on the teacher. It placed the teacher in key ownership of the knowledge.

E.S.Weatherby. M7158158. Ringing With Voices: 'Guide Participation' During the Literacy Hour. EdD. 2004.

The social conventions were:

1. The teacher is expert.
2. Interruptions from pupils are not welcome and will be perceived as calling out.
3. A system of turn–taking is to be observed and the right to speak will be judged by the teacher.
4. Contributions have to be relevant and their significance is deemed as such by the teacher.

<u>Social Processes During Circle Time: "Don't talk when other people are thinking",</u>

It is significant that the teacher dealt with social processes during Circle Time and did not feel able to address them or integrate them during the Literacy Hour. The teacher was trying to promote an atmosphere where pupils helped each other (as mentioned earlier the school was in the throws of addressing how they developed pupils personally, socially and cognitively).

There was an attempt to set the context for discussing 'ground' rules to help the pupils to think and work together and to concentrate on their work.

<u>Extract 19: A 'whole' class session during Circle Time.</u>

> Teacher… Circle Time is a time when we think about how we are with each other, how we behave towards each other and really what we think about each other.

The teacher focused on the personal and social relationships in the classroom, trying to orientate the pupils to each other. It is from this back and forth of interaction that meaning and intersubjectivity is created. However, as the sub-title "Don't talk when other people are thinking" illustrates, there are some obstacles and assumptions which prevent mutual learning from happening. A fuller account of these obstacles will be provided in Chapter 6.

<u>Mutual Learning and Relationships.</u>

The teacher tried to emphasise the importance of positive relationships.

A 'whole' class session during Circle Time.

> Teacher: We're not all the same. We can't all be good at the same things but we can *help* each other. We can *help* each other in the play ground or we can *help* each other in the classroom by caring for each other and by knowing even if E. is good at doing something it doesn't matter if maybe H. can't do it because E. can *help* her. We need *help*. We need *help* as much *help* as we can get from everybody to show how much we care.

The sentiment was undeniably there with the repetition of 'help' seven times. The use of "we" was also pertinent as the teacher seemed to being imploring the class to cooperate. Perhaps the use of "we" also signals an admission by that the teacher that she needed empowering in terms of how to get the pupils to work collaboratively. Moreover, the use of "we" is also significant because the teacher's role, voice and behaviour are also part of the wider picture and equally open to scrutiny as to how they influence the teaching and learning context.

Circle Time created the possibility of another relationship for the teacher and pupils. During these occasions there was an opportunity to cast the pupil as expert and to 'allow' them to take on the skills of teaching. This offers some likelihood of the 'transference of responsibility' (Rogoff) where the adult hands over responsibility for the task to the child and, in doing so, empowers the child.

Extract 21: A 'whole' class session during Circle Time.

> Pupil J.F.: Um, some people are good at some things that other people can't do.
> Pupil O: If somebody wants to do something what you can do and they can't do it you can teach them.
> Pupil K: Somebody can do something better than you and you wanted them to teach you and they didn't and then a different person came along and said, "What's the matter?". You said, "I can't do um what that other person can do" and the person said, "I can't do it either" – so it doesn't matter.
> Teacher: That's right. Sometimes, sometimes it doesn't matter if you're not Brilliant at something as long, as long as you do your best and as long as if you See somebody who is struggling you try to help them as well and you try and

support them.

Again the sentiments were there but as the following extracts illustrate there does not seem an appreciation or over view of the required skills or strategies necessary to put collaborative learning in place. There also seemed a naiveté to the existing practices and relationships in the classroom which might mitigate against such collaborative practices becoming embedded.

One of the dominant findings in the Literacy and Hour which was repeated during Circle Time was the rigid adherence to turn taking.

Extract 22: A 'whole' class session during Circle Time.

Pupil P: Um, don't talk when other people are talking.

Teacher: That's a really good one. *Don't talk when other people are talking.* Don't try and say your bit when it's their turn as that's really not fair. T?

Pupil T: Don't shout out.

Teacher: *Don't shout out* which is one of those rules lots of people seem to forget. There's a lot of people who still shout out.

Again the teacher repeated and endorsed those rules which were deemed salient. The importance of turn – taking was extended beyond teacher/pupil interactions to include peer dialogue. Pupils were expected to listen to another pupil's comments before offering their own: "Don't try and say your bit when it's their turn as that's really not fair." It was legitimised as facilitating better thinking.

Extract 23: A 'whole' class session during Circle Time.

Pupil H: Don't talk to someone when they're trying to think.

Teacher: Yes, *don't talk to someone when they're trying to think.* That's a good idea. I tell you that when we're in lessons, don't I.. If you go off and I tell you what work to do and I say: Right go onto your tables. If you start talking, all these wonderful ideas you had up there in your head, they'll disappear. J?

Pupil J: And don't make noises when other people are talking.

Teacher: Whatever you do make sure you listen. That's a really good one.

The practices encouraged during 'whole' class sessions were being recommended for working during the unsupervised time. The quote: "If you go off and I tell you what work to do and I day: Right go onto your tables. If you start talking all these wonderful ideas you had up there in your head, they'll disappear" reinforced this distance between individuals. It was also promoting the dominant view of thinking as something done by individuals in their own heads. Quiet was necessary to facilitate and talk was perceived as impeding the thinking process. However, this is not in line with mutual ways of constructing knowledge which seeks to encourage pupils to think out loud together, (Mercer et al, 2000).

Ultimately the teacher was reinforcing the asymmetrical relationships to be found in the whole class session during Literacy. The teacher made this connection between the social conventions discussed during Circle Time and those practised during the Literacy Hour.

Extract 24: A 'whole' class session during Circle Time.

> Teacher: …Not just important in Circle Time but also important in all our lessons. Not just when we're sat here altogether but when we're doing literacy, or when we're doing numeracy and when we're learning about different things. We need to think about rules because those rules will help us concentrate better …let's just think about these special rules and trying to think about behaving in that way in our other lessons as well.

Rather than encouraging different types of interaction the same pattern of interactions was being enforced. This essentially reinforced the main speaker as having authority:

Extract 25: A 'whole' class session during Circle Time.

> Pupil E.D.: Put your hand up and don't shout out.
>
> Teacher: Yes, *put your hand up*! Wait your turn! Try and concentrate and listen to others. Look at the person who is talking so, I'm talking now, so everybody (if you're playing the proper rules) should be looking at me, because I'm the person who is talking.

The teacher reinforced the status of the person who was talking "I'm talking now, so everybody (if you're playing the proper rules) should be looking at me, because I'm the person who is talking." Perhaps implicit in the teacher's words was the intention to keep a hierarchy of voices in their place. The ultimate authority in the classroom was the teacher's.

The Tasks:

The tasks observed during Circle Time reinforced the connections between being quiet and being able to concentrate and think. In one of the tasks set for Circle Time the children had to pass round a tambourine quietly. The other tasks involved the children being quiet and following the leader (the teacher) in 'Simon Says'. On another occasion the children passed round a box with a mirror inside and were told "I don't want you to tell anybody else. We'll talk about it when we've finished at the end." Thus participation was closely controlled once again. If the pupils wanted a more active role in the interaction then they were expected to follow a code of behaviour.

Extract 26: A 'whole' class session during Circle Time.

Teacher: If you wanted to be the leader how would you have to sit and behave?

A.H. Sit straight and be quiet.

Teacher: *Sit straight and be quiet.*

Again the teacher endorsed the pupil's comment by repeating it. There was also a suggestion that if a pupil wishes to be chosen then ideal behaviours have to be apparent. In this case sitting straight and being quiet. It is open to question as to whether this is the behaviour of a leader or an ideal follower/pupil.

Social Conventions: "I can see you're not concentrating because you're not following the Circle Time rules."

The teacher tired to engineer the teaching and learning environment by 'discussing' the 'ground' rules for behaviour. The teacher's intentions were to encourage caring and sharing relationships but it was the pupils' responses which actually defined what was going on. The following extract illustrates what happens if the Circle Time rules get broken.

Extract 27: A 'whole' class session during Circle Time.

> Pupil K: Because if you talk too much and break the rules too much you might get sent out and when you can be a bit gooder you can come back.

Again talking or talking too much was not seen as a socially desirable act. It led to an infringement of the rules and necessitated the offending pupil to be removed from the circle or social gathering until they had curbed their impulse to talk. Teaching and learning environments can not be engineered. Rather the social conventions for speaking and listening emerge from the complex reactions and interactions between individuals and communities. This extract illustrates the conflicts and control relations entailed in every day practice n the classroom. Conflict resided in the teacher as her intentions clashed with her execution of other dominant practices in the classroom.

Show 'n' Tell and Learning as Mutually Constructed.

Show 'n' Tell had taken a relegated position since the pressures to meet certain curriculum demands. It was often in the context of Circle Time, time – tabled for an afternoon session and took approximately 15 minutes of the 30 minute slot.

The Opportunity to Chose the Topic.

It was an important activity in the context of this study because the children were able to choose the subject within certain parameters.

Extract 28: Show 'n' Tell.

> Teacher: Now remember what we said about showing we said that it really had to be something very special or that it had to be something we are learning about.

The children showed things they had made', bought or won. They had the rare opportunity to select the topic, albeit within certain parameters, and to talk about something which was of personal value and interest to them.

The Relationships.

In the brief interludes when children were permitted to experience Show 'n' Tell their privileged choice of task cast them as experts.

Extract 29: Show 'n' Tell.

Teacher: Right, if you have something that you wanted to show, what I want you to do is to tell me about it so that I would know.

In the previous extracts of pupil/teacher dialogue the children were saying something that the teacher already knew. In the following extract pupils were cast as experts.

Extract 30: Show 'n' Tell.

Teacher: Can we have some information about it H?

Pupil H: Um, well it's…

Teacher: What is it?

Pupil H: It's a…

Teacher: It's a what?

Pupil A.M.: An (inaudible) 2000.

Teacher: *Oh, I don't know what that is. What is that?*

The children initiated the topic. The construction was made out of bricks and based on the Nimbus 2000 from Harry Potter. It was a collaborative project involving 5 boys (2 of whom were in the 'more' able target group and another two who were part of the 'less' able target group). The roles were reversed with the child as expert. Pupil H. was asked to give information and the teacher admitted to not knowing what it was: "Oh, I don't know what that is. What is that?" Interestingly the recording was barely audible as the children whispered their contributions. This might illustrate that they were unused to speaking in a position of authority.

Features of the Discourse:

The children had the opportunity to address their peers as well as their teacher. However H's body

language and volume of voice indicated the address was being made to the teacher and not to the pupils.

Extract 31: Show 'n' Tell

Teacher: Right, H. would you like to tell everybody why you made a card for me. Why did you make it?

Pupil H: *(inaudible with pupil faced into teacher).*

And then again with pupil J.M.:

Extract 32: Show 'n' Tell

Teacher: (turns to J) What have you got there?

Pupil J.M.: *(softly spoken and turning to the teacher)* A special necklace.

Teacher: And where did you get this necklace from?

Pupil J.M: *(inaudible and keeps eye contact with the teacher).*

The above extracts shows that the pupils are not connecting with their audience who, significantly in terms of this thesis, consists of peers. It is uncertain whether the pupils are more intimidated by their peers than by the authority of the teacher. Or whether they address the teacher in deference to await an authentication of their contribution. Or whether they are simply not used to talking to other pupils during the lesson. Curiously the teacher does not encourage the children to make eye contact with the audience or to project their voice. This would have been an ideal opportunity for the teacher to give prime position to the pupils' voices and to encourage pupils to participate in lessons with a robust and confident voice.

There were occasions when the pupil was given more opportunity to take part in the lesson:

Extract 33: Show 'n' Tell

Teacher (turns to Pupil O) What have you got?

Pupil O: I made this! *(close to the teacher and turned to the teacher).*

Teacher: Oh, right. Are you going to tell us how you made it?

Pupil O: *(turned into teacher)* I have to put beads (moves hands) on plastic urn shape. I've got stars and hearts and you put all different beads on and when you've finished you…there's this tracing paper and you have to put it on and iron it and then you have to take the plastic thing off.

Teacher: Oh, very good. So you have to iron it to make it stay in shape. *I think H. has a question for you.*

Pupil H: I've got one but I leave it for a bit because it might get hot so I leave it for a bit and then I come back to it and then I take it off.

Pupil O: (*looking at teacher and speaking softly*)……put to face,

Teacher: Oh, oh right. Right one more question. Would you like to choose Somebody to ask you a question?

Pupil M: I've got one of those.

Teacher: try…*If somebody brings something in try and think of a question not just say that you've got the same.*

This was a spontaneous attempt at instructions. In contrast to the teacher led instructions of the Literacy Hour the teacher handed over responsibility encouraging the pupil to talk about a pupil initiated subject to the rest of the class. The teacher was still needed to 'guide' the speaker as the pupil still addressed the teacher as the eye contact and body language demonstrated: *"close to the teacher and turned to the teacher"*, *"turned into teacher"* and *"looking at teacher and speaking softly"*. The pupil was reminded that people had been listening as the teacher said: *"I think H. has a question for you"*. However overt reminders were not given about audience awareness. The teacher did not seem to recognize that it was inappropriate for the children to direct their talk only to her. The person who was talking was not reminded to look at their audience. This was an ideal opportunity to 'bridge' a Circle Time rule which stated that the class should look at the person who is talking. Perhaps this should be extended to not only look at the person who is talking but to the person who is listening.

The teacher was aware that the talk was parallel and not fully interactive: "*If somebody brings something in try and think of a question not just say that you've got the same.*" The audience were not given guide lines on how to behave in this situation. The teacher could have assumed the role of

facilitator, managing responses from the class in the early stages; encouraging the audience to listen and respond appropriately. The speaker needed guidance too to address their audience and to manage and respond to questions. They needed encouragement to make eye contact with the audience and to stand towards the audience in such a way as to address all the audience. They required assistance to speak clearly and audibly and to give full and detailed explanations. They were encouraged to invite the audience to ask questions but these were bolted on rather than responding to the talk in an interactive and evaluative way. More significantly the pupils were not invited to discuss and had little awareness of their role as speaker or as the audience. They were not encouraged to make that imaginative leap which is necessary when considering how utterances will being received by others. In the absence of such support, the obvious way therefore would be for the pupils to behave as they do in the 'whole' class sessions with the teacher. They address the teacher with no consideration for their peers and as an audience they remain quiet until they are asked to participate.

Conclusion.

The above results addressed the second research question: Does the teacher establish collaborative learning practices during the 'whole' and 'guided' sessions? This chapter clearly indicated that traditional areas of the curriculum that normally prioritised social processes such as Show 'n' Tell and Circle Time were failing to develop pupils as speakers and listeners or to develop pupils as collaborative learners. These results resonated with those found in Chapter 4 which discussed the restrictions of the 'whole' class session during the Literacy Hour on the social processes of learning. However, Chapter 5 illustrated that these restrictions were still dominant even when it was one of the teacher's intention to encourage collaborative relationships. These conclusions impacted on the next stage of the study which explored these messy restrictions and conflicting and contradictory practices even further. It soon became apparent that the adult was part of this dilemma restricting participation and, yet, was also crucial in 'guiding' children's active participation in collaborative learning. However, as the intervention was not embraced by the class teacher as a whole class initiative, it soon became necessary that the researcher should assume a new role as participant researcher rather than non participant researcher. Then, the researcher would address the inhibiting features discussed in this chapter and the target groups would be encouraged to interact with their peers whilst still continuing to complete the 'normal' classroom activities. The intervention will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6– Obstacles from the Existing Classroom Culture.

Introduction.

This program of research has three phases. The first stage related to the first research question: To discover whether children monitor, support and challenge one another when they are unsupervised during the Literacy Hour and to observe whether they share knowledge/the same language. This was the focus of the initial study and formed the subject matter of Chapter 4. The findings were that children rarely worked collaboratively when left to work unsupervised in groups. They either worked individually, some resorted to play ground behaviour, others worked off-task and a few managed to work together albeit unskillfully. The second phase of the study and the subject of Chapter 5 took place in Year 2 and related to the second of the research questions. This was concerned with whether collaborative learning was a feature of the main discourse of the classroom and whether the teacher had sufficient opportunity to encourage class members to take responsibility for their own and other's learning during unsupervised work. The overall findings were that that 'whole' class, teacher directed interaction did not prepare the pupils for working in small, supportive, peer collaborative groups. In fact the teacher modeled behaviour that mitigated against such practices being established. This led to the third phase of the study and the focus of the Chapters 6 and 7 which address the third research aim: To trial an initiative for peers working collaboratively during the unsupervised of the Literacy Hour in an attempt to increase participating voices. This involved piloting an initiative for laying down 'ground rules' for peers working together. The third phase was, however, problematic as there were significant restrictions on raising the status of talk and collaboration. This chapter offers an analysis and discussion of the nature of these restrictions. The restrictions range from those arising from observations and descriptions of the different aspects of the classroom environment to restrictions which arise from the analysis of the discourse.

This Chapter deals with the researcher's experiences of and reflection on the initial stages of the implementation of practices for mutual/collaborative learning with small groups during the Literacy Hour. This was a necessary stage allowing the slow, iterative process of reflection and adaptation which is characteristic of this thesis's methodology. The initiative remained in the natural context of the classroom and certain general guiding principles (arrived at after analyzing data from chapters 4 and 5) led the sessions Children should be encouraged to:

- ✓ take responsibility for their own learning;
- ✓ ask their own questions of the text and of each other;
- ✓ seek and give explanations;
- ✓ analyse the strengths and weaknesses of theirs and others' contributions;
- ✓ make connections or 'bridge' their comments with those of others or other knowledge areas;
- ✓ seek consensus or a compromise;
- ✓ make choices of how to work, with whom to work and which resources to use;
- ✓ be open to the ideas of others';
- ✓ evaluate their own work in accordance with an agreed set of criteria;
- ✓ work in a positive, encouraging and inclusive way;
- ✓ show a mutual concern for each others' learning;
- ✓ instigate and manage conflict;
- ✓ adopt a variety of roles to keep them engaged with the task and relationships at hand;
- ✓ be aware of the social purposes of the task and
- ✓ to be involved in the joint construction of text

However, it soon became apparent that the initiative to engender collaborative practices in the Early Years classrooms was subject to influences and restrictions at a class, institutional and National level. It was necessary to experience these constraints in an attempt to reflect on and design cultural tools to combat the limitations and eventually free ourselves of the constraints imposed by the existing cultural tools. A grounded theory approach was adopted so that the researcher could explore the transcripts and work out the cultural restrictions on collaborative activity in the classroom.

Cultural Restrictions on Collaborative Activity.

Restrictions on the Sample.

It was important that the study and the researcher worked within the restrictions and expectations of the classroom in an attempt to explore the freedoms given to both the teacher and the pupils in that situation. Such a concern for authenticity, it was hoped, would give the study more credence with practitioners.

The implementation took place during the Spring term before the Key Stage 1 tests. Permission was granted to work with both target groups. However the researcher was made aware that the 'more' able group of 6 were expected to attain level 3. The 'less' able group of 4 was also selected by the researcher. This included 3 pupils with I.E.P.'s and a fourth pupil who was operating at Level 1 and was expected to achieve Level 2 with support. One of the special educational needs pupils transferred to a special school during the initiative. The other two pupils with I.E.P.'s were not expected to sit the Reading Paper during the SATs. As a result only two sessions were spent with this group as the teacher withdrew those pupils from the study and replaced them with 4 different pupils (2 girls and 2 boys) who needed additional literacy support to attain level 2.

There was a genuine dilemma in the study. In chapters 4 and 5 it was easy to become zealous over the pitfalls of the teacher taking too much responsibility for what goes on in the classroom and for being perceived as the 'expert'. Although the decision to remove these pupils was made at the classroom level, it was indicative of the pressure under which the teacher worked. In a climate of teacher accountability for standards it is understandable why the teacher would prefer to remain in control. The teacher's success and the pupils' attainment would be judged by the SATs results which would be made available to both parents and governors. Ironically this control is a façade as the teacher was dutifully observing government guidelines and operating in a climate which has arguably witnessed a demise of teacher autonomy. It was inevitable (although not acceptable) that the pupils and the researcher would experience restrictions.

<u>Time Restrictions.</u>

The main finding of this way of working, i.e. increasing the children's oral contributions, was that the structure of the Literacy Hour did not permit enough time for pupils to explore and discuss a given task. Initially the teacher allocated the 'guided' time of the Literacy Hour to work with the targets groups. This time gradually extended beyond the twenty minutes to thirty minutes when the rest of the class attended assembly. Eventually the groups were withdrawn for the whole hour and sometimes one hour and a half so that extended discussions could take place and integrated reading, writing and oral work might ensue.

Restrictions Imposed by the texts.

Restrictions were imposed at a resource level as the texts to be explored were designated by the teacher. In the first phase a fiction book was issued to the 'more' able group, Morris and the Cat Flap. The researcher was allowed to chose a factual book from Reception for the 'less' able group entitled The Honey Bee. The texts became more restricted as the SATs approached. Previous level 3 test papers were supplied for the 'more' able group: "Grey Wolf", "Diamonds" and "The Swan's Gift". The 'less' able were given an old level 2 paper entitled "The Honey Bee".

There was a constant conflict between voices whether it was the tension between the authority of the researcher and the pupils or between the text and the pupils. During these sessions where the SATs papers were used it felt as if the text as resource was assuming the same restrictive authority as the teacher's voice in the 'whole' class sessions. To counter this, the researcher explored the different opportunities to enhance the pupils' involvement in creating text i.e. encouraging text as process.

There was an attempt to give the pupils more authority over the text but again there was a tension here as Extract 34 shows:

Extract 34: 'More' able group discussing past SATs paper, "The Swan's Gift",

Researcher: Question 4 says: The voice Anton heard was quiet as a …

Pupil F: …swan.

Pupil A: …a mouse.

Researcher: It would certainly be that if you were making it up but if you were looking at the book as they actually described what it would be like. "Why not asked the voice?" (the voice on page 4) "A voice as soft as…"

All: Snow.

Researcher: Look at the book. So number 4 again then. Look at pages 4 and 5 and you will find the answer. The answer is as soft as snow.

The researcher felt torn at once praising pupil A for the creative response: "It would certainly be that if you were making it up A" and then having to remind the group that they were gathering the answer from the text: "…if you were looking at the book as they actually described, what it would be like?"

"Why not asked the voice?" (the voice on page 4) "A voice as soft as…" The researcher 'controlled' the discussion but the authority was given to the text: "If you're in doubt you must always return to what's written in the book and go for that." Ultimately the task is linked directly to the requirements of the SATs and so the pupils are having to learn the 'correct' response to the task rather than a 'literate' or creative response to the text.

It was difficult for the researcher overthrow old practices of letting the written word assume ultimate authority:

Extract 35: Addressing the 'more' able.

> Researcher: Talk in your groups and say what you think the answer is. Look at your book for the answer and then write it in your speech bubble. Agree on what you're going to write. You don't have to agree with each other. There's four people in your group really because it's you three and the book. The book has something to say. And if people won't believe you, see if they believe the book… Listen to each other! Give your ideas! Look at the book! Don't accept what people say! If people say something, unless you definitely know it's right, if you've got any doubts say: Prove it! How do you know that? And maybe they'll look in the book.

The researcher in the early stages of the study made unsuccessful attempts to provide alternative resources for individuals from listening to the voices and the ideas of the people in their group to using the book: "There's four people in your group really because it's you three and the book." The answer was up for discussion and agreement: "Agree on what you're going to write. You don't have to agree with each other." It had to be negotiated and there was a need for proof: "…if you've got any doubts say: Prove it! How do you know that?" The importance of listening and of offering ideas was encouraged as well as the promotion of conflict by stating that explanations and reasons should be sought where thoughts differ. However the text still claimed a superior position: "And if people won't believe you, see if they believe the book…"

Significantly a different model of literacy was being offered in opposition to the Literacy Hour. Literacy

was being presented as more flexible and open to negotiation and debate. Opportunities were being sought to include the child's 'authentic' voice but obstacles often inhibited the interactive process. The researcher found a constant tension between the children's voices and the recommended SAT's text. The researcher experienced the same conflict that many practitioner's might experience. There was a responsibility to prepare the pupils for a traditional comprehension for the SATs and at the same time a desire to encourage pupils to respond to a text with more 'autonomy' and creativity.

The researcher encouraged conflict by getting the pupils to interact and to challenge each other.

Extract 36: 'More' able group discussing "Grey Wolf",

Pupil A: (to F.) Where does it say that?

Researcher: Good! "Where does it say that?" she said. She wants proof! She wants proof! If anybody gives you the answer say, O.K. I'll accept it for the time being but (.) says I want proof.

Pupil F: (reads) Not for pages 2 and 3.

Pupil A: Where does it say animal's foot prints?

Pupil E.D.: On that one.

Text has been narrowly defined in the National Literacy Strategy often limiting text to a resource or a list of technical skills. It fails to treat text as a process and marginalizes speaking and listening.

Consequently some pupils appeared to be uncomfortable about talking.

Extract 37: 'More' able group.

Researcher: Don't whisper D. You don't have to whisper. It's alright to talk as long as you're talking about the book. In fact the more talking you're doing and the more you're saying and the more comments you're making on the books the better you're understanding it.

The researcher found them self in the position of justifying talk. The dominant aspect of classroom

culture and the main stumbling block to cooperative or collaborative learning between peers seemed to be the relegated position and marginal status of pupil talk.

There were other obstacles to collaborative learning. It was difficult to counteract the prevalent culture in the classroom of individualism and competition exacerbated by the drive for individual outcomes and results. Pupils also associated working with someone as copying and being dependent. Additionally pupils were driven by self interest and therefore wanted to have an individual copy of resources.

Primacy of the Individual and of Individual Activity.

Usually after the 'whole' class session pupils often sat doing individual pieces of work. Consequently they were unused to being asked to share writing paper.

Extract 38: 'More' able working on a collaborative piece of writing based on Morris and the Cat Flap.

Pupil F: Can I have one of those so we can have one each?

Researcher: No, you've got to share. This is what you've got to do.

Pupil E.D.: It's me first.

Pupil A: … and then we'll swap.

In the initial stages of the intervention groups were preoccupied with dividing tasks, sharing out resources and allocating roles. In the above extract they were preoccupied with dividing out their time out so that each had a turn at holding the pen and the paper.

Some individuals had entrenched views. A lot of importance was given to working individually and independently.

Extract 39: 'More' able group: "I'm alright."

Pupil E.D.: We've missed out a page so we don't know what it's about.

Pupil F: No, I've read it so…

Pupil E.D.: We don't know what it's about.

Pupil F: I'm alright.

Pupil E: F!

Pupil A: That's not fair on us then F.

Pupil E: Because she can…

Pupil A: We don't know what it is….

Researcher: (interrupting) You're supposed to work as a group

Pupil A:…and you do.

Pupil E.D.: Yeah!

Researcher: And if you've worked well together as a group, I'm going to get the two groups together at the end and you're going to talk about your answers. Pull together as group!

Pupil A: F! There might be a question on that page that we don't know so…

Pupil F: I know but where have we got to? (reads the page for the other 2)

One pupil insisted on working as an individual: "I'm alright". The other two pressed her to share information using 'fairness' and 'knowing' as key words. The researcher intervened to remind them that they were involved in a collaborative enterprise. This attitude appeared in both groups.

<u>Extract 40: The 'less' able group: "I can do it all on my own" and "You've got to learn to do it yourself".</u>

Pupil M; I'll do one on my own. I can do it all on my own….

Pupil A.M.: Don't look at me! You've got to learn to do it yourself, you know.

C, don't look at mine.

Researcher: Don't do that to him. Try to be helpful as well because if he's looking at you he's asking for help.

Pupil A.M. stated that pupil C should work independently: "You've got to learn to do it yourself, you know." These extracts seem 'typical' of the classroom culture where children are encouraged to work independently and are praised for completing tasks 'all by themselves'. Pupils perceived being able to do something themselves as high status as *'babies'* need help. This was exacerbated during the Literacy Hour where children were grouped by ability. The pupil assessment sheets of the Literacy

Hour illustrated that the 'more' able group perceived themselves as sitting on the top table and needing less help: "They need more help. We are top table and they're not top table". The pupil was referring to the 'less' able pupils.

Copying.

The theme of copying was also implicit in the last extract: "C, don't look at mine".

It was present in the Pilot Study conducted when the sample was in Year 1 and proved to be an obstacle to collaborative learning in Year 2 as well. The researcher needed to intervene on several occasions to challenge behaviour.

Extract 41: The 'more' able group – "You'll be (writing) the same answers."

Researcher: You write on your own but you talk together. You can talk about your answers.

Pupil A: You'll be (writing) the same answers.

Researcher: Well you could be unless you disagree quite strongly with each other because you don't have to agree. If you've got different answers that's your opportunity…

The researcher was cut off but would have added that looking at how others work provides an ideal opportunity to learn from each other. If the work is different then this is a golden opportunity for pupils to deepen their understanding as they listen to explanations. The Literacy Hour recommends modeling in the 'whole' class session which could, as the pilot study attested lead to pupils slavishly copying from the board. Modeling could easily extend to the peer learning groups where peers could learn from seeing each other write.

Competition.

As illustrated in Chapter 3 the pupils tended to be competitive with each other.

Extract 42: The 'more' able working on a past SATs paper.

(Observing the boys. No conversation between them. Booklet open but not

reading. Boys scanning for answers rather than engaging with the text.

Uncoordinated behaviour: One away, one looking on and one reading to himself. Putting books around work).

Pupil D: (*blocking work*)… (*inaudible*).

Researcher: It doesn't matter they are too busy doing their own work to worry

About what you're doing. It's not a competition. *(R. places books flat).* You

don't have to hide it because they're open for everybody to see.

It was common for the boys in both groups to hide their work by covering it with their arms or by building a wall of books around their work. These were the physical signs of the barriers that impeded the full interaction of the social processes in the classroom.

The boys in the 'less' able group were similarly competitive:

<u>Extract 43 - The 'less' able group: "We'll give you a race".</u>

Pupil AM: We won! We won!

Researcher: Let's go through it. Does it follow the alphabet? A–b–c- d–e–

f–g–h–

Pupil M: abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz.

Researcher: Good! Now stick them down.

Pupil AM: Mitch, we'll give you a race.

Pupil T: We're not racing.

Pupil AM: We are. We'll give you a race.

Pupil M: We've won! We've won!

Pupil AM: We'll give you a challenge.

Some of the boys were keen to work competitively: "We'll give you a race… We'll give you a challenge" and some boys were keen to meet the challenge and try to win: "We've won! We've won!" In Chapter 4 (which featured the analysis of unsupervised peer groups) it was noted that children worked competitively in an attempt to give them an edge over their peers. Unfortunately, this tendency was strengthened by the researcher using external rewards. Rewards were instigated after

reading Jenny Moseley's work on Circle Time (1993 and 1996). She suggested that when encouraging different social practices in the classroom stamps, stickers and cubes in the jar should be used to reward and reinforce good behaviours. However, it is debatable how effective the rewards were. In the short term it kept the Early year's pupils on task. It also gave credence to the social and personal purposes of the task which had hitherto been side lined in the classroom. The boys in particular responded to them but in the long term it also fuelled their competitiveness and furthered individual reward which impeded collaborative social practices.

The researcher tried to encourage a challenging atmosphere but further obstacles would result if this was perceived as competition by any of the participants (including the adult). All the above restrictions imposed by classroom culture illustrate the impact of underlying assessment practices.

Division of Labour.

When the groups were left to organise themselves they divided the task for individuals to manage in discrete chunks. This was similar to the way the teacher divided the tasks during the 'whole' class session on puppets featured in Chapter 5. They allocated each other certain questions and then left an individual to get on with that question as well as taking full responsibility for reading and finding the answer. The other members sat there until it was their turn as can be seen in the next extract.

Extract 44: 'More' able group working on a past SATs paper.

Pupil J: D is doing all the writing again and won't let me or H do the writing.

Researcher: You've got to share the activity. You've got somebody in your group D who is not happy.

(D. ignores).

Researcher: How many have you done D?

Pupil H: No it's the bigger. No it's the bigger. I'll show you.

Pupil D: We're doing a page each.

Researcher: Is that alright with you J?

Pupil J: Yeah.

Researcher: Just because he's writing doesn't mean that you

Pupil H: Look D it's that one!

> can't talk. Because although it might seem that he's got hold of the pen that he's doing it all you're actually - like H, D might be writing but H has got plenty to say so that's your way of contributing to it.

This group divided the task so that at any one time only one person used the pen and the booklet. "We're doing a page each." The remaining two sat and waited their turn. Pupils seemed concerned that one person should have control of the pen: "D is doing all the writing again and won't let me or H do the writing." There is a concern here that they should have a turn at writing as a way of gaining status. The researcher challenged this way of working by applauding the fact that one of the members of the group had a lot to say: "D might be writing but H has got plenty to say." The researcher was inviting them to 'contribute' simultaneously. The others were encouraged to talk and to make connections by 'bridging' two pupils together: "D might be writing but H has got plenty to say so that's your way of contributing to it." This was also done on a personal and social level when the researcher told Pupil D that Pupil J was not happy: "You've got somebody in your group D who is not happy."

The researcher took every opportunity to challenge the division of labour as the next extract illustrates:

<u>Extract 45: The researcher addressing the 'more' able group.</u>

> Researcher: Don't forget it's not the answer I'm looking for it's how you're working as a group and as I see it now all you do, you give somebody the booklet and tell them to do the next one and you two then just sit back and let him do it and don't actually help him. For all you know he could get the answer wrong!

The researcher needed to be present to question the way jobs were divided as it interfered with the joint nature of the dialogue. Unfortunately pupils were unable to create meaning together. The text was not read together and the questions and answers were not arrived at after a group discussion and consensus. Consequently there was not a meeting of minds or fully interactive dialogue.

Adopting the Authoritarian Stance.

A further difficulty was encouraging the pupils to focus on the social processes of peer group work. The researcher tried to encourage this in the previous extract "You've got somebody in your group D who is not happy" and "Is that alright with you J?" However there was a tendency for one or more of the group to adopt the authoritarian stance of the teacher which made peer collaboration difficult as the following extract illustrates.

Extract 46: 'More' able group working on Morris and the Cat Flap.

Pupil A: E. can do the tail and arms. I can do the head. F. can do the body.

Researcher: So that's what you think. Have you actually made sure that..? No, listen. That's what you think, have you actually asked them if they agree? You can't make people do things. You have to give a suggestion and then ask them what they want as well. You can't bully people into doing things whether it's in the playground or whether it's in the classroom.

(A. still takes it as her decision as others look on).

Pupil A.: There, everybody gets a piece.

The researcher was trying to encourage this group to discuss possibilities before a decision was made. However, First School pupils might not be used to this practice and might imitate the authoritarian style either found in the home or in the classroom. There is also a strong concern over fairness, taking turns and equal shares.

The authoritarian stance adopted by one or some of the pupils sometimes caused conflict between their other working partners.

Extract 47: 'More' able group reading past SATs paper: "Diamonds",

Pupil A: What does it say? What does it say?

Researcher: That says that diamonds are used in some tools.

Pupil E: Put a tick.

Pupil F: Yes, yes put a tick for doctor's tools.

Pupil A: Girls, this is my sheet.

Pupil E: It's not yours.

Researcher: They're helping.

Pupil A: I never told them what to do when it was their turn.

Researcher: But that's the point of it.

Pupil A needed the questions read: "What does it say? What does it say?" which places her in an unequal relationship to the others in the group. The other members of the group, pupils E and F, directed pupil A: "Put a tick!" Perhaps it was the style of the girls which drove A to claim ownership: "Girls, this is my sheet." The children were copying the management style of the teacher. It might also be the habit of dividing a task and allocating individuals to the specific jobs within that task that fuels ownership. Pupil A similar to the researcher resorted to turn taking in an attempt to win the argument: "I never told them what to do when it was their turn." In this sense turn taking becomes a barrier to joint collaborative learning.

The following extract is a similar example to the previous one but with the 'less' able target group.

Extract 48: Non – collaborative work in the 'less' able group.

(Still no talk. T. works by himself, writes then takes book from M).

Pupil M: No!

Pupil T: I'll do this one.

Pupil M: *(grunts and moves chair away and then forward. Hands book to T).*

Pupil T: You write it!

Researcher: Is M. helping you T.?

Pupil T: No.

(T. points to word and then the page).

Pupil T: Tongue! Tongue! On there look!

(M. moves to write it).

Pupil T: *(inaudible)* M! *(Shoves pen at him as T. looks at book).*

Pupil T and Pupil M work separately: "I'll do this one." Again one pupil seemed to be dominant with

pupil T directing pupil M: "You write it!" and "Tongue! Tongue! On there lock!" Again one pupil took an authoritarian stance rather than pupils meeting on a more equal footing.

Turn Taking as a Barrier to Collaborative Practices.

The researcher often resorted to 'take–it–in–turns' which is encouraged in Early Years as the fairest way of settling disputes. However, as indicated in chapters 4 and 5 it might actually inhibit the quality of thinking.

Extract 49: The 'more' able group deciding on whom should write.

All *(chorus)* I will! Me! I will! Me!

Researcher: Take it in turns. You could have one pencil and pass it on. Or, you could have your own pencil and choose to do different questions.

Pupil A: E writ last.

Researcher: Then swap. Swap pencils. Don't forget that 's what I'm looking for: how you work together.

In the heat of settling disputes the researcher resorted to: "Take it in turns." The pupils displayed strong feelings of fairness, equality and having the same amount of time, turns and resources.

Extract 50: 'More' able pupils writing about Morris and the Cat Flap.

Pupil F: It's my turn.

Pupil A: No. we've got three questions so we can each have one.

Pupil A: No, that's not fair because it's my turn.

Pupil F: Yeah, because we won't have the same amount of goes then. It wouldn't be fair because I…

The pupils are upholding very laudable values for social practices. However, the adult has the difficult role of responding to the right opportunity for the 'guided' group to discuss the appropriateness of rules across different contexts. Turn taking is a starting point but its application is limiting in establishing the more sophisticated collaborative practices in the classroom. Many teachers, however, might feel that

such discussions on personal and interpersonal issues interfere with literacy work. Significantly the existing time structure of the Literacy Hour does not allow for such social concerns to be discussed. Time pressures are such that these instances were never fully exploited and it high lights again the importance of an additional adult being contingent on groups other than the 'guided' one in order to empower them.

Assertion and Counter Assertion.

Peer discussions often resulted in a deadlock of assertion and counter assertion.

Extract 51: The 'more' able group discussing Morris and the Cat Flap.

Pupil H: What about number 5? Morris had an accident what did he do?

Pupil D: *(emphatic)* Morris had an accident what did he do? He weed.

Pupil J: What did he do *next*? He drooped.

Pupil D: Morris had an accident what did he *do*?

Researcher: Work it out between you. Trust somebody in your group.

Pupil H: Look it's drooped.

(D shakes his head and H points to the book).

Pupil H: Morris drooped.

Pupil E: You're copying us.

Boys: We're not!

Pupil E: No, but it's drooped.

Pupil D: No, but…

Pupil E: It's drooped!

Pupil D: …he had an accident. What did Morris do?

Pupil E: He drooped after he had an accident *(thumping hand)*. It told you what he did after he had the accident.

Pupil D: Morris had an accident what did he do?

Pupil E: He drooped!

Researcher: You might just agree to disagree or you might agree to put both answers down. Literacy is a bit more flexible than Maths.

In the transitional stage there was a tendency to use emphatic and repetitive statements to affirm beliefs with a cycle of 'thumping' the same answer as is illustrated in Extract 51. This indicates the importance of a 'guide' to break this cycle of assertion and counter assertion. There was a difference of opinion amongst the boys as to how *what did he do?* should be interpreted. The researcher decided to encourage discussion and to avoid interference. Pupil H resorted to the book when the researcher opted to decline authority. Later a fuller range of voices joined in when the parallel group joined in. The 'guide'/researcher not only intervened on an academic but on a personal and social front as well.

Restrictions Imposed by Ability.

The above themes raised are validated by the talk of both groups but the difference in ability seems manifest in a difference in degree as a result of that type of restriction. Another obstacle in encouraging groups to work collaboratively on texts was not to have too great a disparity in ability. Pupil A was included in the 'more' able group owing to social challenges faced in working with other groups. This pupil at times especially when asked to read the SATs papers as seen in extract 52 felt over awed by the others in the group.

Extract 52: The 'more' able reading a past SATs paper, "Diamonds".

Pupil A: Why do you always have to be right though? You don't want me…

Pupil F: We do.

Pupil E: We do.

Pupil A: Then what do you want me to do?

Researcher: Listen! Listen!

Pupil A: Why don't you tell me to do something if you want me to do something.

This was a group whose social cohesion was threatened by the differences in ability. One member found the task too difficult which inhibited compatibility and mutuality. It was difficult to be proven wrong: "Why do you always have to be right though?" and this pupil high lighted the importance of the affective dimension of working together. Further this high lights how difficult this way of working is especially when the children were used to working dependently: "Then what do you want me to do?"

The ability of pupils seems to cross over another themes. The assessment procedures of the SATs led to the disregard of the attainment of 'less' able pupils and to the pressure on the 'more' able to achieve their best. Restrictions were, therefore, placed on the behaviour of the pupils' and that of the adults'. Furthermore, the emphasis on individual activity was exacerbated with ability especially for the 'less' able who were eager to gain equity and status.

Difficulty of task and Dependency on the Adult.

Even when groups were grouped by ability collaborative learning was difficult to achieve. When the work was academically challenging social cohesion was difficult to achieve.

Extract 53 The 'less' able group.

Researcher: Take it in turns to…

Pupil C: I need you to help me!

Researcher: A, working with C, I want you to find the word antennae.

Pupil A.M.: No, I'm colouring!

(Cut).

Pupil M: I'm gonna colour in.

Researcher: No, you're helping T. He's looking for eyes. You give him a chance to do the book as well and I'll ask how you've been getting on. M, you help. I don't want T doing it all. I'm going to ask how you've been getting on.

(No talk).

The pupils found it easier to resort to dependent pupil/adult relationships: "I need you to help me!" or to employ avoidance tactics rather than engage with the academic or personal task: "No, I'm colouring!" Under these circumstances the researcher resorted to turn-taking: "Take it in turns to…" and became adamant about the purpose of the group: "I'll ask how you've been getting on. M you help. I don't want T. doing it all. I'm going to ask how you've been getting on."

The following extract embraces a number of the themes from the previous commentary. When a

number of these factors come together they jeopardise the whole experience and make collaborative work problematic.

Extract 54: The 'more' able group working on a past SATs paper, "Diamonds".

Pupil E: Mrs. W. A's not letting us put it in the middle so we can't see.

Researcher: You need to put it so everybody can see.

Pupil A: That's not fair because they said that I don't have to see it.

Researcher: Why don't you sit in the middle and then…

Pupil A: I've said that but they're saying it's not fair…

Pupil F: I want to go in the middle.

Researcher: Who's going to do he writing? Have you worked out how you're going to do the work?

Pupil A: I'm going to do it.

Pupil F: I want to!

Pupil E: Take it in turns.

Pupil F: Take it in turns.

Pupil A: But both of you have read and I didn't get to do anything.

Pupil E: Because you couldn't read it that's why we read it for us.

Researcher: There's different things to reading isn't there. There's actually reading it which they've done.

Pupil F: Take it in turns.

Researcher: Listen there's different things that you do in reading. Somebody actually does the reading. You might have actually heard it. You're still reading. Somebody's read it to you but you still had to listen to it and understand it so you weren't just sitting there doing nothing were you. You were listening and taking it in. So when you ask a question you might actually provide the answer. That's because you listened to what was read. You weren't just sitting there doing nothing. When it comes to the writing and it comes to the discussion of it you've got to take it in turns. You've got to contribute as much as you can. So, however many questions there are why don't you divide it by 3. So if they're 9 questions you do 3 questions each wouldn't you.

This group, consisting of two 'able' readers and a reader who was 'average', showed more signs of social conflict. This conflict might have been the result of three pupils in a group being too many for early years children. Or, tensions resulting from the difference in ability which put a strain on the group and on the 'low' achieving pupil in particular: "Because you couldn't read it that's why we read it for us". The 'less' able reader felt excluded "But both of you have read and I didn't get to do anything." The group relied on old platitudes: "Take it turns" which in fact interfered with the joint nature of the task. The researcher high lighted the key important skill of listening "Somebody's read it to you but you still had to listen to it and understand it so you weren't just sitting there doing nothing were you. You were listening and taking it in." The significance of this skill is not fully appreciated in the National Literacy Strategy.

Unfortunately the researcher too reverted to existing cultural practices such as turn taking: "When it comes to the writing and it comes to the discussion of it you've got to take it in turns." This is the problem of slavishly relying on 'ground' rules such as the ones found in Circle Time. The researcher should have made more of the key word contribution; "You've got to contribute as much as you can."

Extract 54 saw the researcher becoming entrenched in dividing the task: "So, however many questions there are why don't you divide it by 3. So if they're 9 questions you do 3 questions each wouldn't you." Again this interferes with the joint nature of the task.

This extract highlights the short comings of introducing 'ground rules'. They can be over played by both pupils and the teacher especially when collaboration breaks down. They can also be learnt in the tight structure of a 'whole' class session but fail to be administered in the dynamic interaction to be found in small unsupervised groups. The appropriateness of rules have to be trialled and challenged. This is a sophisticated process which has to be monitored with a sympathetic adult.

<u>Classroom Culture – The Importance of the Adult as 'Guide',</u>

Encouraging collaborative ways of working was as demanding for the researcher as it was for the pupils. It was easy to fall back on old platitudes and traditional modes of teaching as the above extracts testify. The researcher was required to work with small groups constantly reinforcing ways of working together. The adult needed to be contingent on the practices as they arose managing the difficulties and praising desirable behaviours. This highlights the importance of the teacher or class room assistant

'guiding' small groups and promoting critical discussion. In addition it flags the importance of the adult acquiring a good working knowledge of the social and personal make up of the groups. This shared history is fundamental to the success of 'guided' participation in the classroom.

Children cannot be left to manage themselves or settle their own disputes. There are too many areas of potential conflict (academic, personal, social, practical etc) for pupils to be left to their own devices. Learning 'ground rules' is a good starting point but it is not enough to empower pupils when faced with coordinating their behavior with others in an unsupervised situation.

Extract 55: The 'more' able group working on a past SATs paper, "Diamonds",

Pupil A: E, that was supposed to be my go. I was supposed…

Researcher: Well do it then!

Pupil E: She slammed the pencil down. Rub it out and put 8.

Researcher: Well do it then. She doesn't mind do you E?

Pupil A: (.) already do an 8.

Researcher: (whispers and takes rubber) Just rub it out and do it again,

Pupil E: It doesn't matter.

Researcher: It doesn't matter. It's not important.

Pupil E: Write 8.

This was the episode featured in Extract 52 after pupil A was challenged and proven wrong by the other two members of the group. Pupil A has her own personal and social challenges in and out of the group. Pupil E senses this by placating pupil A: "It doesn't matter." The researcher influenced the scene in an attempt to keep intersubjectivity intact: "She doesn't mind do you E? …(whispers and takes rubber) Just rub it out and do it again… It doesn't matter. It's not important." The researcher acts as a go – between, connecting the pupils. Bridges are made in an attempt to get the children to meet half way, to compromise, to try and appease people. This reinforces the essential nature of personal and social education in this field and the key skills of negotiation and cooperation. The adult is the human bridge or arbitrator connecting children at a social, emotional and intellectual level.

The adult, with the cooperation of the pupils, was also responsible for encouraging a new culture of

learning. However the restrictions detailed above made it difficult to realise this new way of working in the classroom. One of the most important aspects of the study was to be conscious of these restrictions and to maximise the conflict they generated. However this process was time consuming and, as a result, it has implications for how time is organised during the Literacy Hour.

Chapters 7 and 8 will discuss the implications of these findings in more detail and how the researcher adapted or reformulated ideas about how to work within or remove some of the restrictions previously mentioned for the next phase of the research. Consideration will be given to the importance of selecting numbers for peer work, probably a pair rather than a three and not having too much difference in ability. If 'bridges' are to be encouraged then perhaps it is necessary to ensure that the crossing is not wide. Chapters 7 and 8 will also illustrate that the adult has to move away from prioritising individual, academic attainment and towards valuing the social processes of learning. This involves encouraging and prompting a pupil's self awareness of their own behaviour and that of their peers. This was made easier when children were empowered by a comprehensive and integrated program of personal and social education

The next chapter discusses how the researcher sought to overcome these restrictions.

Chapter 7.

Setting the New Agenda of 'Guided Participation',

Introduction.

This chapter will offer an account of the background which led to the decision to introduce an initiative. It features transcripts from the beginning of the initiative when the researcher first worked with the target groups in setting a new agenda for peer collaborative work. This involved the researcher and the pupils raising the status of children's speaking and listening, encouraging personal and social development, setting different relationships in the classroom and focusing on specific features of the pupils' discourse. The latter involved exploring text as a resource and, more significantly, in terms of this study, text as a process.

Background.

As we have seen so far the main discourses of the classroom were not geared to raising the status of speaking and listening and collaborative practices. Peer collaboration in particular was marginalized. Speaking and listening was not planned and discussions of behaviour in terms of how children work and play with others was limited to the controlled discussions during Circle Time. Any constructive experiences in the classroom that the children had of speaking in their own terms on work related topics with their peers had to be exploited. The researcher often referred to the speaking and listening practices used during Show 'n' Tell and the researcher also made use of the ground rules 'learnt' during Circle Time as they had been legitimised by the teacher and were a common starting point for the groups. These were:

1. Look at the person who is talking.
2. Don't spoil games.
3. Don't imitate people.
4. Put your hands up.
5. Wait your turn.
6. Don't shout out.
7. Try and concentrate and let other people concentrate.
8. Don't make fun of people when they make mistakes.

E.S.Weatherby. M7158158.Ringing with Voices: 'Guided Participation' During the Literacy Hour. EdD. 2004.

However, these recommendations had limited value as they often applied to teacher led, 'whole' class interactions and failed to address how pupils should speak together and to value the contributions of others.

The aim of the initiative was to encourage the groups to work and talk together and as the previous chapters highlighted this was in conflict with their experience during the 'whole' class session of the Literacy Hour. In the 'whole' class sessions dialogue was very controlled and so pupils were not prepared for the sort of dialogue or dynamic relationships to be found in peer interactive learning. It soon became apparent that the researcher not only had to raise the status of speaking and listening but had to equip the pupils with the personal and social skills needed to work in peer groups. Furthermore, pupils were being encouraged to use a discourse which allowed them to challenge, consider, evaluate, negotiate and choose.

The main aim of these 'guided' groups was to develop an alternative culture which valued the speaking and listening skills of the pupils and raise the status of collaborative working practices. A new agenda had to be set where speaking and listening would be given a higher profile. The children were given more time to think and talk before they committed their ideas to writing as the following quote illustrates: "Pupil J.F.: Do you need your pencils? Researcher: No, you need your mouths and your brains." As was discussed in Chapter 6, this was very difficult in a climate of prescribed times and testing where the teacher expected to see a written result and an individual outcome. Pupils were too preoccupied with getting the answer down and disregarded whether they copied the answer from their neighbour or scanned and lifted it from the text. Engagement with the text whether it was with the text as resource or participating in text as process was limited.

This phase of the study required a more active role for the researcher in steering an intervention which sought to address the restrictions discussed in Chapter 6. At the end of Chapter 6 the researcher, in common with Mercer, states that the adult is needed as a 'guide' to encourage collaborative learning. However, the researcher was reluctant to present the children with a set of rules at the start of the intervention or to present collaboration as a mechanism to be learnt and transmitted. The lesson started with a reminder of the purpose of the lesson: "Working together as a group. That it wasn't a matter of who did what; it was a group effort and the finished article was owned by the group" and "Don't forget

that's what I'm looking at: How you come to understand things as a group – not on your own! How you listen to each other and how you talk to each other". A deliberate strategy was adopted where the researcher allowed pupils more time to think and talk spontaneously. In keeping with the slow, reflective and iterative pace of the study the researcher wanted to observe the spontaneous behaviour of the children and highlighted good practice and challenged inappropriate practice only when it spontaneously occurred.

Both grounded theory and discourse analysis was applied to the transcripts. The transcripts from the previous chapter and the themes and sub-themes which emerged as cultural restrictions on collaborative activity, enabled the researcher to evaluate the transcripts during the intervention with a renewed attempt at engendering 'cultural change'. However, discourse analysis was also needed to characterise the interactions between the researcher and the children and to reconstitute the power relationships in the classroom.

When and where the children were introduced to 'the rules' was regulated by the children who made up the groups. This approach seemed to be more embedded in the context of the activity and more responsive to the natural behaviours of the children rather than imposing a set of abstract rules or metascripts on the situation. It was hoped that the spontaneity and meaning of working collaboratively would be properly attended to rather than focusing on the mechanics of collaborative learning. Furthermore, it was hoped that the children would have more space to participate and assess their own speaking and listening practices and those of others as well as their working relationships with their peers. This approach afforded the children the opportunity to work out and negotiate their own way of working together and to let the practice of working together be its own curriculum. More importantly it was hoped that through this negotiation they would invest more of themselves and this would energise their future participation. This flexibility was needed in some groups where conflict threatened the personal, social and academic connections in the group. This will be discussed later in the chapter.

The intervention was tempered by the researcher's responsibility to work within the constraints of the forthcoming SATs. However there was still plenty of opportunity to change classroom culture by attempting to resolve conflict, increase inclusion, increase group participation and by addressing the children's relationships with each other, with the teacher and with the texts they encountered. It was

found that these cultural barriers to collaboration could be overcome via the appreciation of the process of talking together and valuing the personal and social skills that bring this about.

Setting a New Agenda for Encouraging Interpersonal Strategies for Peer Collaboration.

The Importance of Group Discussion.

Attention was drawn away from the adult as the resolver of problems and the fount of all knowledge. The peer group was assigned a new status as a shared resource.

Extract 56: A New Agenda for the 'more' able group.

> Researcher: Ask the group if you have any concerns about spelling or punctuation. If you can't agree about how to spell something like horrible put a little dot by it and at the end I'll ask the whole group to go and get a dictionary. Don't get bogged down by one tiny spelling…It's not important that you get the answers right. It's not a test. I'm not testing your reading or your spelling… *How* you talk in a group and *how* you listen in a group and *how* you work together.

Not only was the researcher moving the focus away from the adult and individualised learning but there was also a temperance of the technical aspects of literacy: "I'm not testing your reading or your spelling". The assessment of the literacy session was being changed away from the precise areas of reading, writing or phonics encountered in the 'whole' class session and toward the social processes of communication: "*How* you talk in a group and *how* you listen in a group and *how* you work together." The researcher had to continually reassure the pupils that it was acceptable to take an exploratory approach to literacy: "It's not important that you get the answers right." This approach was at odds with the curriculum which was highly prescriptive and focused exclusively on technical expertise. The social processes for effective group discussion become more important.

Extract 57. The 'more' able read Morris and the Cat Flap.

> Pupil A: How do you spell Rose?
>
> Pupil F: R–o–s–e.
>
> Pupil F: Have we got to get the spelling right?

Researcher: We'll check it at the end.

With the focus being moved away from the teacher and technical expertise, pupils started to volunteer help and information. Pupil A asked for help from pupil F. However, pupil F still looked to the researcher for reassurance: "Have we got to get the spelling right?" The researcher not only diminished her power by using 'we'll' to encourage collaborative enterprise but also the authority of the technical curriculum by demoting checking spellings to something that is done at the end. This was a risk as the greater accuracy in spelling is a deciding factor in whether a child is issued a level 2 or 3 during SATs.

Extract 58: Involving the 'more' able group in the assessment.

Researcher: I can't hear F. saying very much in your group. I'm going to ask you how you thought you got on and who contributed to the ideas.

In Chapter 6 the impact of assessment practices was seen to underlie many of the classroom practices. As a result the researcher introduced the notion of 'checking up' which gave credibility to this way of working. "I'm going to ask you how you thought you got on". However, the pupils were asked to take responsibility for taking an active part in their own assessment and learning. They were accountable for the evaluation of tasks, not only in an academic sense but a personal and social one as well as they were being reminded of the desirability of contribution rather than outcome: "I'm going to ask you … who contributed to the ideas."

Importantly, the evaluation of: "*How* you talk in a group and *how* you listen in a group and *how* you work together" was to be conducted by the children themselves. The evaluation was to be seen in terms of the process regardless of whether they got the answer correct. Unfortunately this did not extend to the three pupils with I.E.P.'s who were removed from the project by the teacher and replaced by pupils who needed additional literacy support in order to sit the Reading Comprehension paper of the SATs.

The Group and a Good Dose of P.S.H.E.

The National Literacy Strategy purports to move away from individualised ways of working and to move towards maximizing the teacher's time with groups but, as discussed in the previous chapter, entrenched individualised practices in the classroom proved an obstacle to group learning. Furthermore

teacher control over interactions has grown with the increase of teacher led 'whole' class and 'guided' sessions during Literacy, Numeracy and the use of Circle Time. Unfortunately the group work championed by the N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour does not extend to or equip classrooms for the collaborative interaction between peers during the unsupervised time. Therefore, this initiative fills a gap by asking pupils and teachers to embrace a new way of working which breaks away from individualised ways of working and towards pupils working together as a group.

Pupils as Helpers.

The researcher started with encouraging the straight forward personal and social skills of caring and sharing.

Extract 59; The 'more' able group.

Pupil D. I can't find chapter 2.

Researcher: Someone tell him the page number.

Pupil E: 25

Researcher: Page 25.

(Pupil E stands up and helps Pupil A)

Researcher: That's it! You help her. That's what I mean by helping each other, making sure nobody is struggling.

The researcher asked for others to help: "Someone tell him the page number" and subsequently help was offered voluntarily: "(E stands up and helps A.)" At this stage the researcher used a technique noted in the whole class session: "That's it! You help her. That's what I mean by helping each other, making sure nobody is struggling." Correct answers or in this case desirable behaviors were given a high profile and praised by the researcher in the hope that it would encourage those practices in the classroom.

During Circle Time the class teacher talked abstractly about helping each other with work. Extract 60 illustrates how helping became a key word during the intervention:

Extract 60: Addressing the 'more' able.

Researcher: You're not just listening to me but you're listening to each other.... You're going to work in groups and you're to *help* each other. You're going to talk through and *help* each other to read it don't work on your own. *Help* each other to read it and *help* each other to understand it because there are times in the classroom when Mrs. T or me are too busy with the other children. So if you're sat with somebody who can *help* you then you don't feel so alone.

The difference between this situation and Circle Time is that the adult is contingent on the behaviour actually taking place. As a result the ground rule of helping is embedded in a 'real' life context. The researcher tried to emphasise the practicalities of helping each other: "...there are times in the classroom when Mrs. T or me are too busy with the other children." There were also personal and emotional benefits: "So if you're sat with somebody who can help you then you don't feel so alone."

Extract 61: The 'more' able studying a past SATs paper.

Researcher: You're doing ever so well. Just imagine doing this on your own. You might feel a little put off by it. Again in your group, find these words in the story, pages 2 and 3, and draw a line to match them to their meaning... Look how the person next to you has written as well. If you're not sure or you feel worried about what you've written, check it with somebody. How did you do it? That's the thing of working in a group, you can take some of the pressure off yourself.

The researcher reassured the group that collaborative practices could prevent people feeling isolated or worried about their work in the absence of the teacher.

Inclusion was important during the initiative.

Extract 62: The 'more' able group.

Researcher: Don't leave A. out.

Pupil E.D. A? Mrs. W. A's crying.

Researcher: You're not doing it on your own are you. If you were doing it on

your own it might up-set you but you're doing it with other people.

Pupil F: I'm trying to do it on my own, to find out on my own so I can learn it.

I might want a little bit of help or if someone else wants to know the answer....

This illustrates the importance of helping out, caring, sharing and comforting. Pupil E had a heightened awareness of this: "Mrs. W. A's crying." The researcher was still called upon to comfort Pupil A. Dealing with someone who is upset challenges our social and interpersonal skills to the full and so the adult has a responsibility to model the behaviour needed in this situation and, in turn, appease the distressed child and empower the other. Pupil F still held the strong belief that learning was done as an individual as well as recognising that one might need help as well as being called on for help: "I'm trying to do it on my own, to find out on my own so I can learn it. I might want a little bit of help or if someone else wants to know the answer...." Again the researcher encouraged them to work in a group and illustrated the personal value of working together: "You're not doing it on your own are you. If you were doing it on your own it might up-set you but you're doing it with other people."

The pupils were also asked to express how they felt working in a group:

<u>Extract 63: Informal conversation with 'more' able at the end of a 'guided' session.</u>

Researcher: Is it actually harder to work in a group than on your own?

Pupil A: No

Pupil E: No.

Pupil A: It's a bit harder working on your own because if you're alone and you think...

Pupil F: ...and you don't know what to do you need some help.

Pupil E: You need some help...

Pupil A: Yeah, and you don't really get what you're doing and then somebody else knows what they're doing and...

Pupil F: It's O.K. if you have your own teacher and we all work in a group. That's O.K.

Researcher: Can I be quite honest then and say that sometimes if you're working in a group won't you argue?

?:No!

Researcher: A bit?

Pupil E: You would.

Pupil A: Sometimes you'd disagree on something.

Pupil F: Yeah, when you want to do something and there's only one thing.

This way of working made pupils apply certain social conventions such as sharing and being able to overcome self–interest: "Sometimes you'd disagree on something…Yeah, when you want to do something and there's only one thing." The pupils appreciated the support: "It's a bit harder working on your own because if you're alone and you think…and you don't know what to do you need some help." Inevitably one pupil in the group saw this help coming from the teacher: "It's O.K. if you have your own teacher and we all work in a group." At this stage they were given the help of an adult, as support was needed to develop the necessary personal and social skills and discourse before they could work as an autonomous collaborative group.

<u>Resolving Conflict.</u>

Conflict and resolving conflict became important features of the implementation. Conflict in the Piagetian sense (situations or arguments where 'cognitive conflict' accelerates and facilitates understanding) was valuable where children were disagreeing over academic tasks. However conflict was also part of developing personal and social education in the classroom as it gave a unique insight into the pupils' abilities to formulate strategies to resolve conflict.

<u>Extract 64: The 'more' able.</u>

Pupil F: That is what happened with us on that little part on the 1st page at the bottom.

Researcher: Well it's not just those who argued…

Pupil A: It's not really that easy is it?

Researcher: Why isn't it?

Pupil A: Because we're all so different.

Pupil F: And we always disagree. And we always disagree.

Pupil E: We work on our own down there and sometimes I work with J.

The researcher made the pupils aware that the focus was on social interaction. Pupils were being encouraged to have a heightened awareness of themselves and of others pupils admitting their strengths and weaknesses in this area: "And we always disagree. And we always disagree … Because we're all so different …and…. We work on our own down there." One important finding from the study is whether such disagreements and differences can be used to a positive or negative effect. It is the this potential conflict of things going either way that might be responsible for teachers neglecting this type of interaction in the classroom. Conflict creates an ideal opportunity which requires further exploration with pupils during Circle Time and drama, not just from the angle of tolerance but from how we manage differences when working with or playing with others. This is time consuming. However the thesis contends that small, peer interactive group work is the best way of developing personal and social issues in the classroom as individual, personal and interpersonal differences can be addressed in thesis small, supportive groups.

The researcher constantly reinforced the importance of the group but this could also extend to the other groups in the classroom as well.

Extract 65: The 'more' able.

> Researcher: Don't get worried if you disagree. Put your book down D I like to see your face and everybody likes to see what you say and there's no reason – if the boys' group or the girls' group suddenly think to themselves: We can't decide! Ask the other group or ask me – although I'm not going to give you the answers; I'm going to work *through* the answers with you.

Again the researcher emphasised the process: "I'm going to work *through* the answers with you." Collaboration was encouraged at every stage by encouraging them to look to other groups: "…if the boys' group or the girls' group suddenly think to themselves: We can't decide! Ask the other group". Therefore barriers between pupils and groups were being contested. Interestingly the researcher reassured them that conflict was normal: "Don't get worried if you disagree." These moments of conflict became pivotal not only in an academic sense but in a personal and social way as well. They will be referred to as pivotal moments.

E.S.Weatherby. M7158158. Ringing with Voices: 'Guided Participation' During the Literacy Hour. EdD. 2004.

Significantly and perhaps the most difficult to convey, as pupils were trapped into furthering their own interests, was that mutual learning had benefits for the group. The incompatibility of interests was often responsible for group conflict.

The Importance of Inclusion and Joint Ownership.

Extract 66: Working with the 'more' able.

Researcher: I emphasised the purpose of the lesson: Working together as a group. That it wasn't a matter of who did what, it was a group effort and the finished article was *owned* by the group… What you're doing… The thing that I am looking for is *how* you come to the answers.

Pupil E: It doesn't matter who comes last.

Researcher: It doesn't because really you should *all* have a say in each question. It's whether you think you've had enough say in what's being put down.

Pupil E: F's not even helping us at all.

The researcher was stressing the process: "The thing that I am looking for is *how* you come to the answers." Pupil E was coming to terms with this: "It doesn't matter who comes last." Each pupil should feel that they have contributed to each answer: "It's whether you think you've had enough say in what's being put down." The emphasis was on the contribution and inclusion of voice. However this was often interpreted as a strict adherence to turn – taking.

Extract 67: The 'more' able reading a past SATs paper.

Pupil E: F, come on, look it up!

Pupil F: That's not fair!

Pupil E: A's doing the writing, she's looking it up and I'm reading the question.

Pupil F: They're not being fair because they say I have to go last but they agreed in the first place that it went A, Me, E.

Pupil A: No we didn't

Pupil E: I didn't.

Pupil A: No, we agreed it would go A, me…

Pupil E: Me…

Pupil A: E and F.

Pupil F: No!

The trio disagreed on the order perhaps because the last person implied the least important. However the significant feature of this exchange was that the pupils had discussed a reached an agreement albeit a frail one! "…they agreed in the first place that it went A, Me, E. No, we agreed it would go A, me…".

Extract 68: The 'more' able being 'guided',

Researcher: It doesn't matter *who* is writing. It doesn't matter *who's* reading. What does matter is that the answer that you get down there, *each one* of you has contributed to it. That's what's important: *how* you discuss it, *how* you get or *how* you arrive at the answer together. Stop squabbling about taking–it–in –turns. (Cut)…Stop getting bogged down in petty things; it's stopping you from learning.

The researcher had to be contingent on the learning to take advantage of the pivotal moment. Turn taking was challenged as it seemed to be blocking the connections pupils could make with each other: "Stop squabbling about taking–it–in–turns…Stop getting bogged down in petty things; it's stopping you from learning."

Inclusion and keeping the group intact are difficult things to maintain and, therefore, the adult is crucial in keeping the group's intersubjectivity supported.

Extract 69; The 'more' discussing a past SATs paper,

Researcher: That caught me out. That caught me out. Now where is it?

Pupil A: The first diamond was found in India.

Pupil F: All diamonds are…..

Researcher: Now listen A's saying that the first diamond was found in India

but most of them come from…?

Pupil E: I think it was…

Researcher: Diamonds were first discovered in India, so that's what A said.

(Reading from the text) "100's of years ago but there are now more than 20 countries that produce and sell diamonds. Today more diamonds are mined in…"

Pupil E: Australia.

Researcher: (reading) "…in Australia". So A was good there to pull you up.

The first one was found in India but it says most. The next one's a cross as well.

This extract followed extract 55 in Chapter 6 which was fraught with difficulties. The relationships in this group were precarious. The researcher again was needed to manage the conflict inherent in any pivotal moments. The situation was made as non-threatening as possible by the researcher showing that her knowledge was fallible: "That caught me out. That caught me out." Pupil A, who was challenged previously and felt frail, volunteered information. The researcher gave it credence even though it was incorrect. The researcher tried to 'bridge' it to the correct answer: "Diamonds were first discovered in India, so that's what A said. (Reading from the text) '100's of years ago but there are now more than 20 countries that produce and sell diamonds. Today more diamonds are mined in…" and a pupil replied "Australia." Significantly 'bridging' also included keeping intersubjectivity intact: "So A was good there to pull you up. The first one was found in India but it says most." There seems an over reliance on researcher in this instance. During such pivotal moments when social cohesion is so fragile the adult is needed to keep the activity and interaction intact.

<u>Extract 70: The 'more' able group.</u>

Researcher: Are you not helping them?

Pupil A: They don't want me.

Researcher, You've made up your mind that they don't and I think that they do.

Pupil F:… because they're hard.

Researcher: Are you two willing to let A come back in? (nod) What do you find difficult, when she won't listen? (Nod). Right, they were asking you to listen to the last one. They're saying you weren't listening. They were giving you the information. It's something you're doing together. It's not E's. It's not F's. It's not

> yours – all 3 of you. You have to give and take. It's not easy. It's something you have to learn. Which one are you on now then? Why is it difficult to cut diamonds? Because they are....

The researcher challenged the rest of the group: "Are you two willing to let A come back in?" The researcher puts words in the pupils' mouths: "What do you find difficult, when she won't listen? (Nod)." The researcher acknowledged the conflict: "Right, they were asking you to listen to the last one. They're saying you weren't listening". Togetherness, joint ownership, compromise and perseverance were stressed: "Its something you're doing together. It's not E's. It's not F's. It's not yours all 3 of you. You have to give and take. It's not easy. It's something you have to learn." However it is not something they learn instinctively nor can it be learnt by rote. The rules 'learnt' during Circle Time are not enough to calm troubled waters. An adult is needed at the pivotal moments as it involves maintaining a heightened awareness of the personal and social relationships in the classroom and keeping intersubjectivity intact by preventing the psychological barriers or restrictions that inhibit pupils engaging with a given task.

Setting Different Relationships in the Classroom.

Experimenting with relationships seemed crucial to the establishing collaborative practices in the classroom. One of the major challenges in the study was to change the relationships in the classroom and to alter the roles played by the teacher and the pupils.

Changing the Adult/Pupil Relationship.

One of the major tasks for the researcher was to act as 'guide' and facilitator and to reject the authoritarian stance found in the 'whole' class session of the Literacy and surprisingly during Circle Time. The researcher was needed to 'guide' participation and to promote the values of sharing, caring and inclusion and to be contingent during pivotal moments in order to diminish conflict in some circumstances and actively encouraging it in others.

The initial task was to change the role of the adult.

Extract 71 Changing the focus in the 'more' able group.

Pupil D: Mrs. W. how do you spell would?

Researcher: Work it out in a group.

Pupil H: W–o–u–d.

Researcher: And if you can't do it in your group ask the girls.

Pupil H: W–o–u–d.

Pupil J: *(shakes head)* U–*l*–d, u–*l*–d.

Initially Pupil D perceived the teacher as the one in authority which was difficult to alter especially as the 'whole' class and 'guided' sessions during Literacy reinforced the teacher as the expert: "Mrs. W. how do you spell would?" However Pupils H and J soon offered their contributions and the researcher suggested that if those answers were unsatisfactory then Pupil D should ask another group.: "And if you can't do it in your group ask the girls." This widened the sense of audience.

Extract 72 Changing the focus in the 'less' able.

Pupil A.M.: Which is this one? I need help!

Researcher: Right c'mon then. What do you think that says everybody?

Pupil T: Eyes.

Researcher: Eyes.

Pupil M: Eyes.

Researcher: Those great, big, black things that look like sun glasses.

Pupil A: Thank you.

Researcher: You're welcome A.

The pupil again looked to the teacher. "Which is this one? I need help!" The researcher invited the whole group to help: "What do you think that says everybody?"

Extract 73: The 'more' able discussing a past SATs Paper.

Pupil E: Um, what are the two main uses of diamonds?

Researcher: Um, what are the two main uses of diamonds? Tick 2 things. What do you remember? All of you should try and chip in now.

Pupil F: Jewellery.

Pupil A: Jewellery.

Researcher: Do you agree on that? Is there jewelry there?

Pupil F: And… in doctors operations, in operations.

Researcher: Do you agree with that?

Pupil A: During operations!

Pupil E: Right, tick it there.

(F. moves in).

Pupil A: Where?

Pupil E: There!

Interestingly pupil E read the question: "Um, what are the two main uses of diamonds?" The researcher repeated the question and encouraged participation from all members of the group: "What do you remember? All of you should try and chip in now." The researcher did not supply or confirm answer but continued to open up the debate to others: "Do you agree with that?" As seen previously the researcher tried to give the children more authority and change the focus away from the adult and towards the pupil. However this was only part way to encouraging pupils to work together. The researcher also had to challenge individualised ways of working and prompt pupils towards acknowledging a bigger social circle and connect with their peers.

The Researcher was contingent on the interaction and encouraged pupils to work as a group and to use other resources.

<u>Extract 74: 'Guiding' the less able.</u>

Researcher: Use your books and use your diagrams to help explain what you're trying to say. O.K. Imagine that the people who are listening to you know nothing about it. Nothing. I know nothing about a honey bee and I want you to tell me.

The researcher was trying to equip children with alternative resources: each other, diagrams, books etc. The researcher emphasised that the pupil was expert, demoting the adult: "Imagine that the people who

are listening to you know nothing about it. Nothing. I know nothing about a honey bee and I want you to tell me." The notion of audience was introduced, setting a wider set of relationships in place: "Imagine that the people who are listening to you know nothing about it."

One way of the adult denying their authority was to reveal the gaps in their knowledge similar to the 'games' played by a carer with their child.

Extract 75: The reselected 'less' able group discussing an information book on the Honey Bee.

Pupil P: She has 4 wings (counts). 1,2,3,4.

(Girls counting).

Researcher: I didn't know that. I always thought that they had two.

Pupil P: Well they've got more. Two at the front and two at the back.

In this transcript the pupils' voices were more frequently heard than in the whole class sessions. Pupils talked or read with more authority. The researcher admitted a gap in their knowledge: "I didn't know that. I always thought that they had two." Pupil P treated the researcher as uninformed: "Well they've got more. Two at the front and two at the back." The researcher toned down their authority and invited curiosity and awe: "It's alright to be a little bit unsure. Be excited by your surprises. Don't be worried if you don't know." With the researcher being honest about the gaps in their knowledge the pupils felt at ease to say that they did not know.

Extract 76: The 'less' able group.

Pupil MD.: I didn't know that it had 5 eyes.

Researcher: No I didn't. I just thought that…

Pupil EK.: I thought that it had 2.

Researcher: I thought that it had 2 too.

The pupil took the lead in stating a gap in their knowledge: "I didn't know that it had 5 eyes." The researcher was about to admit this when a pupil cut in. Pupils were able to take more control of their learning when they took on the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of their own knowledge. In fact the adult is transferring this responsibility to the child which is an important feature of 'guided

participation'. It is important that the children were able to express their needs or gaps in their learning but equally as important was the researcher's role to make the others in the group aware of their capability to help others as discussed in the previous section.

Pupils found it easier to challenge the teacher by asking their own questions.

Extract 77: Challenging the researcher in the 'less' able group.

Researcher: Do you know what insects have? They're his wings. A, anten…

Pupil M: Antennae!

Researcher: Antennae! What do you think he uses these for?

Pupil AM: Because, so, so he can see what is going on. They're his eyes.

Researcher: See what's going on. They're the eyes. He has got two big eyes.

He's got five eyes: two big eyes and three little ones.

Pupil AM: Where? I can't see.

Researcher and Pupil M: There! There! There! There and some there!

Pupil AM: They could be freckles

Researcher: They could be freckles they're that small.

The researcher and pupil replied jointly "There! There! Some there! Some there and some there!" but the pupil who asked the question challenged the reply stating that the dots were not eyes but freckles: "They could be freckles". The researcher appeared to confirm this so as not to be negative and to show a tolerance of the 'wrong' answer. "They could be freckles they're that small." This acts as a model to the pupils so that they in turn they too might tolerate possible answers. It is also an example of 'bridging' where the adult is trying to keep intersubjectivity intact.

The researcher seemed to still be controlling the interaction in the above extract but this was understandable with young children in the initial stages of the implementation. Old practices die hard as attested in the previous chapter and maybe the best approach is to 'guide' pupils gradually. The important lesson illustrated to pupils was that it is acceptable to challenge, discuss and argue. Again this is indicative of how Literacy can be experienced in a less restrictive way and accords with the researcher's belief that Literacy involves critical awareness and the negotiation of meaning.

Pupil as Expert.

With the researcher assuming less authority the pupil was cast in the role as expert.

Extract 78: The 'less' able pupil as expert.

Pupil A.M.: I know how they make honey.

Researcher: They look for food where C? They look for food where M?

Pupil A.M.: They get a flower and they get things out of it and then they…and they use their arms to push it all up.

Researcher: Excellent. Just listen to this and tell me if you want to add anything. Old A. says it gets to the flower, rummages around, gets all the bits of what ever he gets out of the flower…

Pupil M: Honey.

Researcher: …goes back to its hive, mixes it all up and makes it into honey.

The child became expert, inviting his own knowledge and the researcher then asked the pupils to listen and to contribute. Pupil M was actively listening and so the researcher took the words and framed it in a sentence.

Extract 79: 'Less' able group regrouped.

Researcher: Well this week we're going to look at honey and how honey is made. Right, before we start, how would you say honey is made?

Pupil J.F.: Easy – peasy. Bees get the honey and then they put it in their hive and then the bee man puts it in pots and its honey.

Researcher: That's what you wrote about last week.

Pupil P: The men make the honey…

Pupil J.F.: No, the bees! The bees, the servants!

Researcher: Why do you think the men make the honey P?

Pupil J.F.: Bees make the honey, they get it out of flowers. They mix it…

Researcher: … and put it in the be hives.

Pupil J.F.: Yeah.

The researcher was asking questions but drawing on their own knowledge first: "Right, before we start, how would you say honey is made?" There was a lovely display of confidence from pupil J.F.: "Easy – peasy. Bees get the honey and then they put it in their hive and then the bee man puts it in pots and its honey." Pupil P contradicts pupil J.F. and the researcher picked up on this point: "Pupil P: The men make the honey…Pupil J.F.: No, the bees! The bees, the servants! Researcher: Why do you think the men make the honey P.?" Pupil J.F. interrupted and the researcher added to his sentence and the pupil affirmed it in a way characteristic of Teacher/pupil exchanges: "Pupil J.F.: Bees make the honey, they get it out of flowers. They mix it…Researcher:… and put it in the bee hives. Pupil J.F.: Yeah." However the roles were reversed on this occasion. In addition the pupils had dealt with this topic in the last session. The notion of continuity was important especially when empowering the pupils as experts.

<u>Pupils Challenging Each Other;</u>

Eventually such 'guided' sessions witnessed pupils challenging each other.

<u>Extract 80: Peers challenging each other in the 'less' able group.</u>

Pupil J.F.: No he gets all these things out. All the bees at….

Pupil P.: No, he has trays in the bee hive and he gets all the honey out.

Researcher: And he can just pour it in or does he have to do something to the honey?

Pupil P.: He takes it out!

Pupil J.F.: No, he gets a spoon and scoops it out I think.

Pupil P.: I don't think so.

Researcher: You don't think so. What do you think P? (pause) Does it just pour out of the bee hive like honey?

Pupil J.F.: No, it can't do that because if it did it would just come off the edge.

Researcher: What's it trapped in then?

Pupil P.: He takes it home to the machine and the man (.)

Researcher: You think there's some sort of machine involved.

Pupil J: I've seen how they make honey. There's this place in the summer um they put it in. They get the honey and stuff and then they use this spoon and collect it off the thing.

Researcher: What's the thing?

Pupil J.F.: Um, the bee, the honey holder, whatever…

Researcher: The honey comb.

Pupil: Yeah and then put it in pots and because I've seen how they do it.

This was typical of exploratory talk in the 'less' able group. Their concerns were not so closely tied to the text as the 'more' able group sessions where SATs papers were used. The pupils had the freedom to 'bridge' the topic with their experience and felt able to challenge and contradict each other and speculate their answers: "I don't think so." They seemed able to contradict the researcher partly because the researcher's tone was exploratory. The researcher was still needed as a 'guide' to provide the alternative terms: "The honey comb."

<u>Pupils Taking Control of Resources.</u>

By changing the roles in the classroom the researcher encouraged pupils to take more responsibility and to take control of alternative resources.

<u>The 'more' able groups.</u>

Researcher: What do you think a scalpel does?

Pupil E.: Cut things.

Researcher: You think it cuts….

Pupil A: Has anyone got a thesaurus?

Researcher: No, well she's saying it cut things. Is there anything…?

Pupil E: (points to book) "Cutting things".

Researcher: Go for that then.

Pupil A: (looking at Glossary)

Researcher: Oh good girl. A. just wants to check something. A turned to the Glossary.

Pupil A, Pupil E and Pupil F: (read together the meaning).

R: Are you going to go for cutting things then?

Initially the researcher resorted to a direct question which arose from the SATs paper: "What do you think a scalpel does?" Pupil E gave a shortened answer: "Cut things." The researcher did not confirm the answer: "You think it cuts…." and so pupil A and E took control and looked at resources other than the researcher. Pupil E referred to the text and pupil A looked at the glossary inviting all the pupils to read together. The researcher again deferred authority: "Are you going to go for cutting things then?" and therefore encouraged the group to reach a decision. The researcher 'guided' the participation and facilitated the process of challenging and checking answers. Just as important were the 'bridges' that the adult made between pupils in a drive for reaching a group consensus.

Bridging Ideas.

Extract 82: The 'more' able discussing Morris and the Cat Flap.

Researcher: Who did Morris hope to meet? Do you remember? Who was he looking for?

Pupil E: His Mum.

Pupil A: Who did Morris hope to meet?

Researcher: E's got an idea haven't you E.? Listen to E. even if what she says is not 'right' she can still contribute her sentence, can't she. Excellent. You worked well together and you did your research at home. Hold on E. just wants to contribute something. What do you want to say?

Pupil E: He wants to get the fish.

Pupil A was directing the question at the Researcher: "Who did Morris hope to meet?" The researcher directed it to pupil E in an attempt to 'bridge' two ideas: "E's got an idea haven't you E.? Listen to E. even if what she says is not 'right' she can still contribute her sentence, can't she." The key word here is acknowledging the pupil's comments as a 'contribution' and not as an interruption.

'Bridges' were also made between pupils' answers.

Extract 83: 'Guiding' the 'more' able group.

Researcher: Two very good answers there from you. By sharing those ideas….

Yes, it's only a meal for one or two days but he's killing something of beauty.

One of God's creatures as A. put it. So put that in your own words.

Again the researcher made the learning process open and 'bridged two ideas together: "Yes, it's only a meal for one or two days but (also) he's killing something of beauty."

Interestingly the roles in the classroom were not the only thing being challenged. As stated earlier the researcher was also encouraging pupils to change their concerns from the technical side of Literacy to processes and the pursuit of meaning. The researcher attempted to affect the general cultural learning environment by encouraging and facilitating exploratory discussions in peer groups. This leads onto the next part of peers working together and equipping pupils with the necessary features of the discourse.

Features of the Discourse.

As indicated in an earlier section it was difficult for the researcher to avoid the traditional practices such as instilling a rigid turn – taking system or breaking from this uni-directional style of the adult asking the questions and the pupils answering especially when preparing for the SATs reading paper. However the researcher is not stating that these practices should be dispensed with completely - just used in moderation when trying to encourage mutual learning between peers. The study is suggesting that the teacher/adult takes a very active role in facilitating the social processes of mutual learning. The benefits were not solely social or personal but academic as well. To engage in peer interactive learning then academic concerns about the discourse had to addressed. Discourse was perceived as text as resource and text as process.

Text as Resource.

The researcher encouraged the pupils to take control of the text.

Extract 84: Counteracting the authority of the text.

Researcher: (reads) "The next part of the booklet is about honey, where it comes from and how it is stored. (We talked about that. It's just a different way of putting it). You will read about how bees collect a sweet juice called nectar. (So that's the business you were on about. It's going into the flowers J). How they store it in a…

Pupil J.F.: Honey comb!

The researcher 'bridged' the text with the pupils' dialogue featured in extracts 79 and 80: "(We talked about that. It's just a different way of putting it)". The researcher was encouraging them to recognise their voice in the text. The wording of the text was seen as different and not better or more appropriate than the children's. Pupil J.F. provides a word on his own (which had previously been given to him by the researcher) illustrating that he can use 'expert' vocabulary.

Text as Process.

The Process of Talking About Books.

The key aim of the study was to focus on processes especially social processes. Tied into these was the way that the children listened, spoke and thought together and the researcher made these aims clear to the children.

As mentioned previously the researcher 'guided' the pupils by encouraging them to ask questions and to find information for themselves. By doing this the researcher gradually introduced pupils to a new discourse.

Extract 85: The researcher talks to the 'more' able group.

Researcher: So in some ways the boys were causing me concern as well because although you were quieter than the girls I wasn't actually hearing a lot of conversation between the three of you. So what you tended to do was to say: Well J this is your go and you let J get on with it whilst the rest of you sat there until J finished and until it was your turn. So I've got as much a problem with that as I have with the girls who were arguing because (at least) when the girls were arguing (they were arguing) about the work which I didn't see as a problem. Now some of the things I pointed out are on here. Now when you talk to somebody, when you have a discussion with somebody or if somebody's reading something... A and me could read the same thing and then after it I could say: What do you think A? What do you think of that? And she could

tell me and I'd listen to her and I might be thinking I don't think that. I actually disagree with that but I'll listen to her. That's what you've got to learn to do. You've got to at least listen to people even if you don't agree with them. Then you say, very calmly: Fine that's what you think but how do you know that – so you challenge them.

Pupil E: You say: Where did you find the answer. I want some proof.

Researcher: I want some proof. And if at the end of the day I still don't get it I'll say (I'm not afraid to say) that I don't know. I'm sorry but I don't understand, you're going to have to explain that a little bit more to me. Can you explain that please.

Pupil E: A says that.

Pupil A: Yeah.

Researcher: And then when I've listened to her and what she's got to say then I would think it was my turn. Well I think this and she'd have to listen to me. I think that because… and then I'd say how I came to know it and understand it – which books helped me or what Mrs. T said.

Pupil E: I know because I found it up in a book.

Researcher: Yeah, that's it. This is the proof. If you don't believe my words there it is in black and white. Then you get back together and say: How can we agree? How can we agree on it? Because we've got different views on it. Some times you might agree on it and sometimes you might…

Pupil E: Us 3 don't always agree.

Researcher: No so instead of arguing just for the sake of it especially when you know somebody is shut down you just say….

Pupil F: You'd be wasting your time as well!

Researcher: Fine, you just go with what you want to say and I'll go with what I want to say and we'll see what we get back from Mrs. T. Sometimes if someone isn't going to agree with you just have to agree to disagree, almost.

The researcher met the group after a session fraught with difficulties. The first thing that was being challenged was the division of tasks and taking it in turns: "So in some ways the boys were causing me

concern as well because although you were quieter than the girls I wasn't actually hearing a lot of conversation between the three of you. So what you tended to do was to say: Well J this is your go and you let J get on with it whilst the rest of you sat there until J finished and until it was your turn. So I've got as much a problem with that as I have with the girls who were arguing because when the girls were arguing about the work which I didn't see as a problem." By doing this the researcher emphasised the desirability of interactive listening and speaking: "I'd listen to her and I might be thinking I don't think that. I actually disagree with that but I'll listen to her. That's what you've got to learn to do. You've got to at least listen to people even if you don't agree with them," and then "And then when I've listened to her and what she's got to say then I would think it was my turn. Well I think this and she'd have to listen to me."

Conflict in the form of disagreeing and asking challenging questions of each other was encouraged as long as the pupils heard each other out; tolerated differences and kept an open mind. The pupils developed an awareness of their relationships: "E: Us 3 don't always agree. . . A says that." Pupil A was mature enough to accept that she sought further explanation. Academically pupils were to ask for proof, seek explanation and admit difficulties in understanding. Pupils E, A and F volunteered information and related it to the social learning context: "You say: Where did you find the answer. I want some proof. . . I know because I found it up in a book. The importance of consensus and compromise were high lighted: "Then you get back together and say: How can we agree? How can we agree on it? Because we've got different views on it."

Ultimately arriving at knowledge was seen as a personal business embedded in relationships and sometimes fraught with decision making and choices: "Fine, you just go with what you want to say and I'll go with what I want to say and we'll see what we get back from Mrs. T. Sometimes if someone isn't going to agree with you just have to agree to disagree, almost."

Extract 86: The 'less' able group.

> Researcher: Are you sure about that? If I was in your group I'd say: Where's your proof? Show me in that passage where it says with its wings. You've copied each other without thinking. Hey! See! *(pointing to their identical answers).*

Again the researcher was contingent on this pivotal moment. On this occasion personal and social issues were not to the fore. The researcher acted as devil's advocate generating conflict and modeling the sort of dialogue expected from pupils: "If I was in your group I'd say: Where's your proof?" The researcher was encouraging them to talk together: "Where's your proof? Show me in that passage where it says with its wings." The message was clear that copying without fully engaging with the text or one's partner was acting "without thinking."

Extract 87: The 'more' able group.

Researcher: I disagree with that! You need someone that is going to challenge you. Where did you see that H? I'm not just going to accept that! That's what you should be saying to each other…

The researcher was playing devil's advocate and trying to introduce challenge and conflict into their dialogue.

Extract 88: The 'more' able group.

Researcher: Where's the answer for that. I don't believe you.

Pupil E: I don't.

Researcher: Show me on pages 4 – 5 where it says that then I'll believe you. I can see that the king wanted the wolf to be content - which Is another word for happy.

Pupil A: I'll show you.

Again the researcher modeled the dialogue required trying to inject conflict into the dialogue. Pupil A took up arms and rose to the challenge: "I'll show you."

The researcher not only focused on how they worked together but also encouraged the pupils to think of how they arrived at what they knew.

Extract 89: The 'more' able group.

Researcher: Well you ask them. What do you think H?

Pupil H: (.)

Researcher: Do you think that's the answer then J?

Pupil J: (nods) Yes.

Researcher: Well, how do you know? Because he said it? How do you know he's right?

Pupil J: (.) I remember stuff when the king said that about being…

The researcher intervened in the process encouraging interaction between the pupils and delaying adult commentary. The researcher invited pupils to evaluate on other pupils' work: "Do you think that's the answer then J?" Pupil J was challenged: "Well, how do you know? Because he said it? How do you know he's right?" The pupil's participation was being 'guided' as they were being asked to consider how they knew it. This is the sort of conflict which research in the Piagetian tradition claims accelerates peers and personal self–regulation.

True to the spirit of 'guided participation' the initiative attempted to transfer the responsibility of evaluation and the control of learning to the child. Pupils soon grasped what was expected of them and of others as the next extract illustrates.

Extract 90: The 'more' able group.

Pupil E.: Mrs. W. F's answering but she's not explaining it that well.

Pupil A: I know. She's not explaining it.

Researcher: Brilliant! F. knows the answer but she's not explaining it. That's the whole point: you have to explain the answer to them.

Pupil F: I don't know how to.

Researcher: Well, try!

Pupil F: I've said what it is but they…

Pupil E.: (inaudible).

Pupil A: (inaudible).

Pupil F: But they…

Researcher: You have to explain it.

Pupil: (inaudible)…but she's just said it.

Pupil E.: (inaudible).

Researcher: Right, say it again.

Pupil F: That one.

Researcher: When he first saw the swan what did Anton imagine? He imagined that they were…

Pupil F: …eating roast swan and seeing his children's faces glowing and seeing his family sit around the table.

Researcher: Now put that in your own words. He imagined that his family were….

Pupil A: (interrupting)…eating roast swan.

Researcher: Eating roast swan.

Pupil F: (inaudible)

Researcher: Is that better? Do you agree with that?

Pupil A: How do you spell (inaudible)? E? E? E? Do you know how to spell…?

Researcher Actually the girls have got to the hard bit? By somebody explaining something to you that's how you learn and F., by you explaining it, it becomes clearer in your own head.

The pupils were pushing for an explanation while at the same time recognizing their needs: "Mrs. W. F's answering but she's not explaining it that well". The researcher praised this "Brilliant!" Pupil F was aware of the flaws in her own thinking when interacting with others: "I don't know how to." This comment signals how pupils might blindly write down the answer without fully understanding what they had written. If pupil F had worked on her own this would have been likely to have been the case.

This extract also signals the importance of the adult being contingent on the developing the pupil's voice. A set of 'ground rules' might include 'explain you answers' but this can not sustain a pupil in a situation where they have to give an explanation.

The researcher wanted to get the 'whole' group involved in thinking.

Extract 91: The 'more' able.

Pupil H: Because they like wolves.

Researcher: Because they like wolves. Yeah, which is a good reason. Does

anybody else think… could you not build on that, that would be alright to say first that he liked wolves. What about you D? They liked wolves but what?

Pupil E: So people don't kill wolves?

Researcher: So people don't kill wolves?

Pupil A: So we'd have more wolves on the island.

Pupil E: So we'd have more animals.

Researcher: So we'd have more animals. O.K. so let's see if some of those have helped us.

The adult tried to get the pupils to 'bridge' their answers with others. In this sense the researcher orchestrated the pupils.

<u>Extract 91 cont'd.</u>

Researcher: No listen to him. They scared the children at night time and they killed….

Pupil J: The sheep.

Researcher: They killed the sheep. Who goes with that answer? Who thinks that…comment on his answer don't just give me yours. Now comment on his answer, A, what do you think of what he's just said?

Pupil A: I think it's right because it says it in the book.

(Enods).

Researcher: You think it's right because it says it in the book. *(Reads).* I'll tell you what I *did* like about J's answer and that was he didn't copy from the book. He didn't say frightened, he said…

All: Scared.

Researcher: Scared, so write in a full sentence using the points that J, E and A have agreed are a good answer.

The researcher tried to 'guide' participation and get the pupils to actively listen to each other and to connect with J's answer: "Who goes with that answer?" Pupils were encouraged to evaluate comments and 'permitted' to agree/disagree: "Now comment on his answer, A, what do you think of

what he's just said?" as long as they gave reasons why they agreed/disagreed: "I think it's right because it says it in the book."

Essentially the Researcher championed the eclectic nature of answers whilst also celebrating the 'authentic' nature of pupils' voices: "…so write in a full sentence using the points that J, E and A have agreed are a good answer…and…I'll tell you what I did like about J's answer and that was he didn't copy from the book."

Extract 92: The 'more' able discussing a past SATs paper.

Pupil F: He wants to be free.

Researcher: I'll go with that.

Pupil A: He was angry.

Researcher: I'll go with that as well. He was angry because he wanted to be free so I would unite your answers together. I wouldn't have heard that answer if I hadn't heard you two.

Again this illustrates how the researcher 'guided' them to work together. The adult modeled how pupils could unite different answers: "He was angry because he wanted to be free so I would unite your answers together." This again reinforced the importance of thinking out loud and listening in peer groups: "I wouldn't have heard that answer if I hadn't heard you two."

Extract 93: The 'more' able discussing a past SATs Paper.

Researcher: What do you think of A's answer? Is she convincing you? What I'm saying is are you drawn to agreeing with her? Could she actually convince you by looking at…(Reads) He remembered once how the wolves howled in the moon light, howling on the hills. So, that seems to support your answer A. A's answer actually challenges yours F because he didn't actually know the moon could do that for him – not yet.

Again the researcher tried to bring about conflict and appealed to the group to listen, to evaluate and align themselves with each other and the text.

This 'guidance' was not merely learning a set of 'ground' rules. These can be learnt parrot fashion as was apparent during Circle Time. The pupils needed to be actively engaged in such social practices with the adult making the social processes visible: "Actually the girls have got to the hard bit? By somebody explaining something to you that's how you learn and F., by you explaining it, it becomes clearer in your own head." Furthermore learning a set of 'ground' rules does not guarantee that pupils will act with more autonomy. For instance pupil F lifted the words from the text which was substituting the authority of the teacher's voice with that of the text's. The adult commented: "Now put that in your own words." It was significant that the reply was spoken quietly. The researcher encouraged pupils to articulate an answer in their own words. The adult is more likely to be aware of such possibilities and restrictions on the child's experience and therefore needs to be present during such pivotal moments. It should not be left to such a young child to explore the freedoms in a given situation.

Eventually the researcher moved away from being contingent on the activity and freed the pupils from working with the text as a resource. Talk became the text.

Extract 94: The 'less' able group.

> Researcher; …and if you're thinking how you're going to talk to us and how you're going to organise your thoughts… You practice your talk to each other. O.K., just in your pairs and then I'll put you out in the front and you 3 will sit and listen as your audience as you tell us as much as you can about the bee.

The researcher gave talk and thinking a high profile. It was something the pupils had to practise: "You practise your talk to each other" and organize: "how you're going to organise your thoughts". Unfortunately the Literacy Hour provides little opportunity to rehearse pupils' thoughts. On this occasion the children worked in a small ability group and their plenary would involve them talking to the rest of the group about what they had learned from their text and doing this in front of a real audience.

Often during the plenary (if there was time) the teacher would sum up what the various groups did with a representative from each table (not group) showing their work. In the above set up all members had

the opportunity of taking part in the plenary and the remaining pair (as the audience) evaluated the performance.

This chapter gave examples of the type of adult support needed during the initiative to increase pupils' participation together. As was discussed, collaborative learning makes demands on all those involved at a social and personal level as well as an academic one and, therefore, this chapter highlighted the importance of grounding peer interactive learning in a program of P.S.H.E.

Furthermore, conflict is a inescapable and worthwhile part of these 'guided' interactions with peers. These pivotal moments stimulate and extend thinking and create real opportunities for the group and the adult to discuss how to manage their relationships. Learning 'ground rules' offers a starting point for these discussions but they are not the complete solution to managing collaborative working relationships. The adult's observations of conflict in context and in action offers a valuable insight into the dynamism and stasis of peer interaction. Although it is recommended that the adult ought to contingent on peer interactive learning during the early stages of the implementation, it is also suggested that the adult's presence is not too over bearing. In fact the relationship between the adult and child should undergo changes during the 'guidance'. Ideally the adult should gradually remove their support and the pupils should take on more responsibility for managing their own and others' learning. As the initiative developed and the freedoms and limitations of the situation were explored, the researcher tried to get the pupils involved in the process of making text. This is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 8.

Mutual Learning.

Introduction.

The third phase of the main study came full circle back to the concerns of the pilot study. In line with the pilot study, discourse psychology was applied as it embraced the social and psychological dimensions of making meaning. These are important in a thesis which prioritises the interpersonal dimensions of collaborative learning. During the pilot study (Chapter 4) observations were made of the two target unsupervised groups. The overriding finding was that these groups of pupils did not work collaboratively without some sort of guidance. The first phase of the main study (Chapter 5) involved looking at how classroom culture facilitated or inhibited collaborative learning. The second phase of the main study (Chapters 6 and 7) led the researcher to profile and address the restrictions on collaborative learning and to introduce an intervention for promoting collaborative peer learning. The third phase (the topic of this chapter) presented observations of the target groups to see whether the intervention had influenced the working practices during the unsupervised time. Thus Chapter 8 deals with the evaluation of these new ways of working and should be seen in juxtaposition to Chapter 4.

As previously maintained much of the teacher – led discourse during the 'whole' class session of the Literacy Hour involved the pupils providing information that they knew the teacher already possessed. The researcher tried to encourage the social processes highlighted during the initiative, the listening and speaking skills studied during Show 'n' Tell and to give these skills credibility during the Literacy Hour. (Chapter 5 included observations of the social processes during the whole class sessions of 'Show 'n' Tell'.)

The final phase of the study involved the researcher evaluating the pupils' performance on two different activities. The first one was set by the teacher and was SAT orientated and involved a set book for the group and the other was devised by the researcher and complemented existing work in the classroom on instructions. The task was the same one as featured in Chapter 5 but was more open and interpretative and thus Chapters 5 and 8 should be seen in juxtaposition. The second task aimed to give pupils the opportunity to talk to a real audience and to prepare information that would be at once both informative and entertaining. The pupils were organized in pairs and asked to prepare together a set of

oral instructions and/or present a wild life information program on the bee without the support of an adult. Pupils worked in a creative context which introduced the notion of pretend and provided the opportunity for pupils to adopt different roles (audience, expert, whispering partner, action partner and assistant). They were given the opportunity to work with an audience and to also become an audience of collaborating observers. Both parties had to respond in a way that took the other person into account. The researcher was removed from the interaction (not entirely) by filming the pupils. However, the researcher still had responsibility to be contingent on the action as arbitrator, commentator and facilitator. The pupils soon responded to the different way of working and took responsibility for their own learning. As a result it is peer interactive discourse or mutual learning which is being evaluated in this Chapter.

Some of the dominant features of peer interactive discourse or mutual learning which arose from the analysis of the transcripts appearing in this chapter are:

- ✓ Children taking responsibility for their own learning.
- ✓ Children asking their own questions of the text and of each other.
- ✓ Children seeking and giving explanations.
- ✓ Children analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of theirs and others contributions
- ✓ Children making connections or 'bridging' their comments with those of others or other knowledge areas.
- ✓ Children seeking consensus or a compromise.
- ✓ Children making choices of how to work, with whom to work and which resources to use.
- ✓ Children being open to the ideas of others'.
- ✓ Children evaluating their own work in accordance with an agreed set of criteria.
- ✓ Children working in a positive, encouraging and inclusive way.
- ✓ Children showing a mutual concern for each others' learning.
- ✓ Children instigating and managing conflict
- ✓ Children adopting a variety of roles to keep them engaged with the task and relationships at hand.
- ✓ Children being aware of the social purposes of the task.

- ✓ Children involved in the joint construction of text.
- ✓ Children acting as an audience.

Mutual Learning During the 'Guided' Session.

Taking More Responsibility.

Extract 95: Preparing the 'less' able as experts.

> Researcher: I need you to think about this bit now. You and J. are going to work together. I'm going to give you a certain amount of time for Show 'n' Tell which I'm going to tape and your Show 'n' Tell is about the bee. Take this book and the information that you've just done together and read through it and find out about as much information as you can on bees that you are then going to tell us – so take one each or share it, read through and find out as much information as you can. Not information that you already know although you can bring that to the Show 'n' Tell as well. You've got to keep us interested and you've got to imagine that we don't know anything about it. You're the experts at this!

The pupils used the text as resource to present their own talk and they adopted the role of expert: "…you've got to imagine that we don't know anything about it. You're the experts at this!"

The 'more' able group read and wrote together and checked each others' work.

Extract 96: 'More' able taking responsibility for evaluating work from Morris and the Cat Flap (not a SATs Paper).

> Pupil A: C'mon then, what is it? Tom…
>
> Pupil E: *(inaudible)*
>
> Pupil A: He thinks it would snap his tail off.
>
> Pupil E: Yeah, go on.
>
> *(F. not engaged and not included).*

Pupil A: How do you spell tail? *(Looks to me)*

Pupil E: T–a–i-l.

Pupil A: T…

Pupil E: …a. T–a….

Pupil A: What does that mean?

Pupil F: It means which one?

Pupil E: Oh yeah, which one.

Pupil A asked the question: "C'mon then, what is it? Tom…" to the other members of the group. Unfortunately the reply was inaudible but pupil A gave either a repetition of pupil E's answer or a complete rewording of it: "He thinks it would snap his tail off." Nevertheless it is meant to be considered and agreed upon by pupil E: "Yeah, go on." Pupil A asked another question and, by the adult pausing, pupil E took the initiative and provided the spelling "T–a–i-l." By the end pupil F was responding to the questions with pupil E still confirming the answer: "Pupil A: What does that mean? Pupil F: It means which one? Pupil E: Oh yeah, which one." This transcript illustrates that the group were taking more control of their learning.

Extract 97 ; 'Less' able evaluating each other's work when reading The Honey Bee (not a SATs paper).

Pupil E.K.: She has 3 body parts. 1,2,3.

Pupil M.D.: No, you patted the wings. 1,2,3.

Pupil E: 1,2,3.

Pupil M.D.: Now here, the legs are attached to there and so are the wings.

It looks like a spider there. Look at this one.

Pupil E.K.: She has 2 antennae. 1,2. She has 1 tongue and she has 1 sting.

What's that?

Pupil M.D.: Well….It's like (.) the bees go in it.

Pupil M.D. evaluated and corrected Pupil E.K.: "No, you patted the wings. 1,2,3" and then provided a further explanation: "Now here, the legs are attached to there and so are the wings." Pupil E.K. asked

questions: "What's that?" and pupil M.D. provided a credible reply like an expert "Well.... It's like (.) the bees go in it." This passage shows great focus from pupil M.D. who has accepted responsibility for pupil E.K.'s learning by listening, evaluating and correcting what is being said.

Taking more responsibility allowed pupils to make choices about how they worked but this did not release them from taking responsibility for their partner's learning.

<u>Extract 98 : 'Less' able working collaboratively</u>.

Pupil J.F.: I'll find it this time. Oh, look, babies!

Pupil P: Er?

Pupil J.F.: Eyes. Page 5.

Pupil P: 4, 4!

Pupil J.F.: No, hang on! Finger, eyes – page 4.

Pupil P: I've got to do this one.

Pupil J: You can do two then.

Pupil P: I'll do the last one. *(P writes it down)* What do we need to find?

Pupil J.K.: Let's look on page 3. There's page 3. Now we need to fin…

Pupil P: ….sting.

Pupil J.K.: Sting. *(P. points)*….Page 10.

Pupil P: 10 *(P. writes)*.

The two 'less' able pupils were looking for information on the honey bee. Pupil J.F. opted to find the information on eyes: "I'll find it this time". The division of labour was still apparent here but pupil P was still sufficiently engaged to correct him: "4, 4!" Although this pair divided tasks they did not do them in isolation and there was an attempt to share the task. Pupil P checked Pupil J.F.'s work and corrected it with Pupil J.F. accepting the correction. The organization of their work: "Pupil P: I've got to do this one. Pupil J: You can do two then. Pupil P: I'll do the last one" did not interfere with the task as they were too preoccupied in their pursuit of meaning. Towards the end of the extract their sentence and actions became joined: "Now we need to fin…Pupil P: ….sting. Pupil J.F.: Sting *(P. points)*…. Page 10. Pupil P: 10 *(P. writes)*."

Sharing Responsibility and the Joint Construction of Text.

The following extract illustrates how the pupils built sentences together.

Extract 99 – The 'less' able reading the Honey Bee.

Pupil P: *(to himself)* She has 5 eyes. Where are the eyes?

Pupil J.F.: There are the eyes: 1,2.. 2 big eyes…

Pupil P:….and 3 small eyes.

Pupil J.F.: Honey bees have um…

Pupil P: 1…

Pupil J.F.:…1 tongue and they have…

Pupil P:….2 antennae.

Pupil J.F.:…2 antennae, 4 wings and they have 3 body parts. Sting. It has 1 sting,…

Pupil P:….2 legs…

Pupil J:….and 2 eyes. We'll show you the pictures that we were just talking about.

The pupils worked closely together on building a joint sentence with the use of repetition and prompting ("P:….2 antennae. J:….2 antennae,") so that sentences could be continuous: "Pupil J.F.:….2 antennae, 4 wings and they have 3 body parts. Sting. It has 1 sting,…Pupil P:….2 legs…Pupil J.F.:….and 2 eyes."

This gave the appearance that their thoughts and actions were co – coordinated.

Extract 100: 'More' able reading SATs paper.

Pupil F: Look at that!

Pupil E: That would be 1000.

Pupil F: That would be for the Queen.

(E and F reading together).

Pupil A: So that would be about….

Pupil F: *(points)* …. That would be over….

Pupil E: … that would be over a million.

Pupil F: That would be….

Pupil A: That would be 3,000.

Pupil F: That would be, um, 1,000,000.

Pupil E: That would be less than 1,000,000.

Pupil F: So that would be, um, 9,000,000. Maybe, 90,000,000.

Pupil E: Yeah!

(E and F read together).

Pupil F: That's a big, big diamond. Do you know how big a diamond can be?

Diamonds are as big as that but um they cut chunks off them.

Pupil A: Dia…

Pupil E: They're just little diamonds stuck together.

Pupil A: Guess what? A diamond could be as big as that poster! It could!

Pupil F: It couldn't!

Pupil A; It could!

Pupil F: It couldn't!

Pupil A: It could.

The pupils were making voluntary comments about the text which would normally be marginalized in 'whole' class or 'guided' sessions. The reading appeared coordinated with pupils finishing off each others' sentences: "Pupil A: So that would be about….Pupil F: *(points)* …..That would be over….Pupil E: … that would be over a million" and constantly modifying answers.

<u>The Pupils Take Responsibility for Asking the Questions.</u>

The 'more' able group discussed texts and challenged each other.

<u>Extract 101: 'More' able and Morris and the Cat Flap.</u>

Pupil E: Rose is bossy.

Pupil F; Yes she's bossy!

Pupil A: Yes she's bossy!

Researcher: She did say sorry at the end though didn't she.

Pupil A: She did…

Researcher: In all fairness.

Pupil A:…but she is quite bossy.

Pupil E:.....bossy.

Researcher: Well some people are, aren't they.

Pupil F: Just because she's the oldest child.

Pupil A: No, Morris is the oldest in the?

Pupil E: No.

Pupil F: No, Rose.

Pupil J: Mum! Mum!

Pupil F: Rose is the oldest in the story.

Pupil H Mum! Mum's the oldest!

Researcher: The boys have just challenged you there. They say Mum's the oldest. They're right.

Pupil F: We're talking about the child. We're talking about the child.

Researcher: We're talking about the child. See, good point! See, they want to win the argument don't they.

Pupil J: It's not an argument though.

Researcher: No, not really. It's just a discussion.

The actual 'formal' work was over and the pupils were colouring in and finishing off. In fact, the time for the 'guided' session was over and the group should have been in Assembly. During this time the pupil E made a voluntary comment: "Rose is bossy." Pupil F later gave an explanation for this: "Just because she's the oldest child." This sparked off comments from within and among the different groups as to whom was the oldest: "H Mum! Mum's the oldest! " This pushed pupil F to be clearer in her definition: "We're talking about the child. We're talking about the child." As Pupil J so rightly stated this was the art of discussion without the detrimental effects of argument. It also signaled to the researcher the groups' potential to discuss texts informally away from the adult.

Extract 102: 'Less' able challenging whilst studying a past SATs paper;

Pupil P: What bees make more honey than other bees?

Pupil J.F.: Honey bees!

Pupil P: It isn't there J.

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Pupil P asked the question: "What bees make more honey than other bees?" and Pupil J.F. replied: "Honey bees!" However pupil P did not blindly copy the answer: "It isn't there J." He looked for proof in the text and took responsibility for his own learning.

Extract 103: 'Less' able challenging whilst studying a past SATs paper.

Pupil J.F.: No but its *tube*. It's with its *tube* see.. It says: "It collects Honey with its *tube*."

Pupil P: It says its mouth.

Pupil J.F.: It's the same. What does it say its mouth is shaped like? A tube!

This was a sophisticated exchange between two 'less' able pupils. Pupil P counter challenged pupil J: "It says its mouth" which does not mean that their exchange is 'disputational'. Instead this signals healthy conflict from which they later learn to compromise: "It's the same" and pupil J joined his word, 'tube' with the other pupil's words: : "What does it say its mouth is shaped like? A tube!" This was an example of 'bridging' from pupil J who not only connected the two words 'mouth' and 'tube' but also managed to keep the working relationship intact.

By pupils asking questions of each other they were inadvertently giving status to their peers. However this status or role as expert was not restrictive to either pupil, as pupils still felt able to counter challenge each other and bring about pivotal moments of conflict:

Extract 104: 'More' able group studying a past SATs paper entitled "Diamonds",

Pupil A: What is it F?

Researcher: What would you say F?

Pupil E: The biggest diamond I would say.

Pupil A: Where does it say the biggest diamond? Where?

Pupil E: There but F's going to read it in a minute and see if it's right.

Researcher: What is the largest uncut diamond in the world?

Pupil F: *(reads)*…'largest top quality diamond in the world.

Researcher: Are you happy with that girls?

Pupil E: Yep!

The researcher took a lesser part in modeling the sort of dialogue and desirable behaviours of 'guided' participation. However the adult's presence was necessary as the conflict in this group was not solely on a academic level but on a personal and interpersonal level as well. The first comment from the adult was merely supporting pupil A's comment: "What would you say F?" and repeats the question the group was looking at: "What is the largest uncut diamond in the world?" "However the researcher still felt it necessary to remind them of the desirability of consensus: "Are you happy with that girls?" Otherwise, the pupils took control of the interaction. Pupil A in fact asked for proof: "Where does it say the biggest diamond? Where?" and pupil E gave proof assigning another pupil with the role of checking the answer: "There but F's going to read it in a minute and see if it's right." In fact the whole tone of the extract was one of tentative exploration characterized by pupil E's comment: "The biggest diamond I would say" which illustrated a sort of acceptance that others might challenge and others might disagree.

An Openness to Ideas and Alternatives.

The researcher felt that an increase in the pupils' questioning and challenges ought to coincide with a social concern for tolerance and openness so that pupils did not feel threatened or others did not become too aggressive in their challenges.

Extract 105: 'More' able studying a SATs paper entitled "Grey Wolf",

Pupil F: The howl of another wolf. The howl of another wolf. Shall we tick it?

Pupil E: Yeah A!

Pupil F: You don't have to agree.

Pupil E: You don't have to agree.

Pupil A: It's my sheet!

Pupil E: We want to see what you're doing so we can agree.

Pupil F: She's doing this one, the sound of the wind.

Pupil A: It says the answer in the book and that's the answer.

Pupil E: But what did Grey wolf never hear?

This group was beginning to work and to think together. Pupil F doesn't just go ahead and tick it which

was a big step forward for this pupil who was entrenched in individual ways of working at the start of the initiative: "Shall we tick it?" Both pupil F and E were open to other ideas: "You don't have to agree." Pupil A resorted to individual ways of working: "It's my sheet!" However turn taking and ownership no longer assumed importance as 'agree' became a key word: "We want to see what you're doing so we can agree." Pupil A exchanged one authority with another: "It says the answer in the book and that's the answer." This was actually a step forward for pupil A who normally would be personally affronted. Pupil A argued but also gave proof on an academic level. Pupil E continued to counter challenge and drive home the conflict: "But what did Grey wolf never hear?" Significantly this group had regulated its behaviour and adopted the practices from the 'guided' sessions: allowing commentary and accepting differences in opinions whilst seeking agreement and proof.

<u>Valuing Social Processes.</u>

Both groups were given the topic of preparing instructions, the same activity presented by the teacher in phase one of the study discussed in Chapter 5. The researcher delayed writing and reading and wanted them to talk or think out loud about what they were going to say. Again thinking and talking were being given a high profile and the prime position by encouraging the pupils to do instructions. Furthermore the researcher wanted to maximize participation.

<u>Extract 106: The researcher prioritising role play</u>.

> Researcher: Now, what would happen is that you would have been asked to have written a set of instructions yourself but what I find is when you write your set of instructions you don't actually think through what you're doing. You forget that the person who you are talking to might never have done it before and you take a lot for granted.

Drama and role play informed the 'whole' class, 'guided' and unsupervised time during the intervention. The children's involvement in creating text provided spontaneous opportunities for them to develop an awareness of themselves and each other i.e. to concentrate on the social processes of the task. The pupils also got used to working with different people and their behaviours became more coordinated and less contentious.

A Supportive Social Network with Clear Roles.

Oral work demanded quick decision making. The pupils were asked to play a far greater variety of roles than was observed in the 'whole' class session with the class teacher (Chapter5). Sometimes they were the recipients and sometimes they were the agents. Whatever the role they were made aware of the social significance of the situation.

Extract 107: The 'less' able listening and giving instructions and operating as a supportive social network.

Researcher: Right, c'mon quickly! Right boys, you've had the opportunity to listen to the girls. They did a very good job of it but I want it improved upon.

Pupil P: Get a glass *(no movements)* Add some squash.

(J.F. mimes)

Researcher: How much squash?

Pupil P: A little bit of squash.

Researcher: Let's have a measure.

(Both girls show it).

Pupil J.F.J: 2 cm.

Researcher: Let's go with 2 cm.

Pupil P: *(audience following instructions)* 2 cm of orange. Get the water. Pour it in. Drink it.

Pupil P had a social network supporting his speaking. The adult continued to challenge the thinking "Let's have a measure." Pupil J.F. put the words into actions and also provided the words: "2 cm." The audience also translated the words into actions: *"(Both girls show it)."* Therefore the pupils experienced instructions at an oral, aural and kinesthetic level before they committed themselves in writing which one might argue should be the first point of access for early years pupils.

Extract 108: 'More' able group listening and giving instructions and operating as a supportive social network

(H stands still puzzled).

Researcher: What's the matter H? Is there something they forgot to tell you

because you're looking…?

Pupil E: Oh yeah, then put the lid on the bottle.

Pupil H: Who drinks it?

Pupil J: *(whispers)* Then put the lid back on the bottle.

Researcher: This is testing my listening because um…

Pupil A: When you make orange squash don't you add water to it?

Researcher: Well I thought so too! There…

Pupil E: *(looks surprised)* We forgot the water.

Researcher: You forgot the water. That's a gap in your thinking you see! That's a gap in your thinking….When they said: Pour the squash in! I'd have gone: a glug! (repeat). (Laughter). Whoosh! Until it whooshed all over the sides of my glass. What have you got to do? In maths you' d 've been doing slightly more accurate…

Pupil E: O.K. I'll do it again.

Again the performers had an engaged and supportive audience or social network. The speaker and 'whispering partner' were being challenged. They had to think how their instructions would be received by the recipient (Pupil H. whose actions paused when the instructions were not clear): "H stands still, puzzled…. Who drinks it?" and the audience who noticed a gap: "Pupil A: When you make orange squash don't you add water to it?" This context widened the interaction and enabled the speaker to be influenced by a greater number of peers. The pupils controlled the assessment noticing a gap in both action and thought. The 'whispering partner' recognized the 'flaws', accepted the gap and because the work was oral it was less painful to repeat: "O.K. I'll do it again."

Pupils had to think carefully about the person who was listening and carrying out the instructions. It also provided a creative context where pupils were talking and seeing their words being carried out as actions.

<u>Adopting Different Roles.</u>

Pupils were so absorbed in this process and had such clear roles that they began to work with a more varied selection of children and argued less on a personal level.

Extract 109: Working with the 'more' able group on giving instructions.

Researcher: Can you choose somebody from the audience? Not always your friend or someone you usually work with. Choose somebody different so that we're working with lots of different people today…

Pupils were given roles and one of these was a supportive role so that those pupils who were unsure of what to say ('I don't know what to say') benefited from a whispering partner.

Help from others was important in this social endeavour. The researcher encouraged the pupils to work with a partner or a 'whispering partner', someone who could help when thoughts were hard to come by. The 'whispering partner' helped those pupils who were reticent and would benefit from some extra input. Interestingly in this situation the pupils did not perceive this as copying. The speaker had the benefit of someone informing them (i.e. the whispering partner) and also had a pupil listening to them and putting words into actions.

Extract 110: The 'more' able group giving instructions and the use of a whispering partner.

Pupil D: Get the toaster out and plug it in.

Pupil A: Oi I didn't say that! Carefully plug it in.

Pupil D: Carefully plug it in.

Pupil A whispered to pupil D but became more vocal when a word was missed out "Carefully". The word was important in the context of the purpose of the task as the pupil was told to make health and safety a priority. With an audience watching there is no time to argue so the other pupil changed the sentence to include 'carefully'.

Extract 111: The 'more' able giving instructions and the use of a whispering partner.

Pupil J: *(whispers)*

Researcher: He's got all the talking and the thinking. We don't care if you're doing it very slowly. If you're doing it very slowly then I…

Pupil E: People understand it.

Researcher: People understand but I also know that you're taking your time to think.

Pupil J: I'm thinking.

Researcher: Yes, that's alright. He's thinking – that's what it's all bout. Do you want someone to whisper in your ear so that you can have a whispering partner? Choose somebody to be your whispering partner.

Pupil J: E.

Researcher: Well done. You're beginning to work well with other people.

Again the key words of talking and thinking are emphasized and the importance of taking one's time: "He's got all the talking and the thinking. We don't care if you're doing it very slowly." More importantly the social purposes of the interaction were understood: "Pupil E: People understand it."

The audience had a very important role to listen, receive the instructions and determine whether the instructions secured the appropriate actions for the task to be carried out.

Extract 112: The 'more' able group.

Researcher: What we've got to do is listen and see if she leaves anything out – any little gaps. So we're looking at E's movements and hearing F's words.

The audience was being asked to observe the gaps in the speaker (s)' thinking. Some pupils concentrated on the language and others focused on the visual i.e. the movements of the person who was miming. This was in contrast to the 'whole' class session where pupils' speaking, actions and thinking were restricted. The key words and phrases in these creating text sessions were: listening, gaps in thinking, moving/doing and focusing on the pupils' spoken words.

Thinking Out Loud and Thought as Action.

Part of this supportive social network was the opportunity to think out loud verbally and kinesthetically. There were several occasions where pupils thought out loud:

Extract 113: The 'less' able giving instructions on how to make orange squash.

Pupil M.D.: Open it! Put it in the jug. Put the lid on the jug! *(E.K. looking puzzled)*.

> Put the lid on the jug! And then dilute! No, don't put the lid on! Take the lid off it! Dilute it!

The pupils were thinking out loud in pairs. Thought and action were closely connected so that a pause in action signaled a gap in thought: "Put the lid on the jug! (E.K. looking puzzled). Put the lid on the jug! And then dilute! No, don't put the lid on! Take the lid off it!"

Evaluating the Strengths and Weaknesses of Each Others' Work: Gaps in Thinking.

Pupils took on an evaluative role. It was the audience's job to evaluate and to notice gaps in thinking.

Extract 114: The 'less' able group pretending to peel a banana.

> Researcher: The other thing is we take so much for granted don't we. We just get a banana and open it up and eat it. Did that tell us enough about it? Do you just get a banana and open it up like that?
>
> Pupil J.F.: You do it like that *(peels)*.
>
> Researcher: How do you put that into words?
>
> Girls: Peel it!
>
> Researcher: But where do you peel it from and how do you do it?
>
> Pupil P.: *(doing actions)* From the top.
>
> Researcher: *(actions)* So you peel it from the top. So you snap it at the top and peel it…
>
> Girls: …down.
>
> Researcher: Down. That's better. You have to think, you have to think about what you're saying. Right again boys. You're the audience and I want you to think about the gaps that are in it. Are they giving you enough information?
>
> *(Cut)*.
>
> Pupil E: Get a banana! Peel it!
>
> Pupil J.F.: Er, where? Peel it where?
>
> Researcher: That's good.
>
> Pupil P.: Down.

Pupil J.F. acted out peeling a banana: "J.F.: You do it like that *(peels)*." The researcher pushed for the actions to be articulated in words. A pair from the audience provided the phrase: "Peel it!" Again the researcher pushed for clarity and emphasised the importance of thinking: "You have to think, you have to think about what you're saying." In the early part the researcher 'guided' the group and coordinated the thoughts, actions and movements together. Straight afterwards the audience were given the vital role of listening out for the gaps: "You're the audience and I want you to think about the gaps that are in it. Are they giving you enough information?"

<u>Extract 115: Pretending to peel a banana in the 'more' able group.</u>

Pupil F: How to peel a banana *(movements)*. You get a banana and you peel the skin off and then you eat it.

Another pupil modified this:

Pupil A: You get a banana. You try and break the top off.

Researcher: Oh that's better.

Pupil A…and you peel all the sides downwards.

Researcher: Oh now, that is better. Which two things did she put into that that just gave you a better idea? F?

Pupil F: Break the top off?

Researcher: Break the top off? – so you've got it going that way the banana and not that way so you break the top off and what was the other one thing?

Pupil J: She said pull the sides down.

Researcher: She said pull the sides down and that, if you'd have written that down would 've given you more marks than: You get a banana and you peel the skin off and then you eat it.

Pupil E: That would be fine for Reception.

Researcher: It would be fine for Reception. It is and I don't mean that unkindly.

Pupil A: You don't mean that as "That's useless!" but they don't Understand the words.

Researcher: Yes we've got to be tolerant.

Again the pupils took the lead in creating and recreating text. The evaluation of the text was immediate, the children were involved and the assessment was provided before the pupils start to write rather than post writing. Pupil A showed a sophisticated understanding of the social purposes of the task and how words relate to movement as there was a realisation that insufficient information had been given: "Pupil A: You get a banana. You try and break the top off. Researcher: Oh that's better. Pupil A…and you peel all the sides downwards." The researcher directed the audience to Pupil A's and F's contributions and to the words in particular which filled the gaps: "Which two things did she put into that that just gave you a better idea?" Pupil E then provided a very sophisticated assessment of the two contributions: "That would be fine for Reception." A reminder was given that assessment must always be constructive: "I don't mean that unkindly… we've got to be tolerant" and this was confirmed by a pupil: "You don't mean that as 'That's useless!' but they don't understand the words."

In this session the audience sharpened their listening and assessment skills as well as being aware of the social purposes of the task and of the different levels of attainment. Significantly they had the opportunity to contribute to the values of the classroom by promoting and reinforcing understanding and tolerance as the sort of values discussed during Circle Time. This happened in the 'less' able group as well.

<u>Extract 116--The 'less' able giving instructions on how to make orange squash.</u>

Pupil MD.: Get a bottle of orange squash *(Accompanying body language).*

(E.K. mimes and J.F. mouths)

Pour it in the jug, only a little bit though. The *(turns away from audience and E)*

What next? Dilute it!

(E looks blank and no accompanying body language)

Pupil MD.: *(accompanying body language)* That means put water in it.

Researcher: And she used a very complicated word like dilute a E was thinking:

What!?

Pupil J.F.: (.) and I think it means: Put the water in.

Researcher: Yeah.

Pupil MD.: You can't drink it with no water in; it's not good for you.

Researcher: If she's going to use the word dilute there will be some people….

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> Pupil J.F.:...she's got to tell E what it is.
>
> Researcher: Yes, how would you do that to a piece of paper though? If you'd used a complicated word or you'd read a complicated word in a book, how can you find the meaning of it. In the...
>
> Pupil J.F.: Dictionary!
>
> Researcher: Yeah, but what was at the back of that bee book. M?
>
> Pupil M.D.: The Glossary.

Pupil M.D. worked without a whispering partner and so needed time to think to herself. Curiously pupil M.D. turned away from the audience: "The (turns away from audience and E.K.) What next? Dilute it" The context was reliant on body language: (E.K. mimes and J.F. mouths) and (E.K. looks blank and no accompanying body language). Therefore pupil M.D. was aware that pupil E.K. was having difficulty: "Pupil M.D.: (accompanying body language) That means put water in it." Pupil J.F. who was in the audience commented on the importance of explanation: "...she's got to tell E what it is." This was a clear signal that pupils had a responsibility to each other to make their explanations clear. Again this points to encouraging socially desirable behaviours such as tolerance, understanding and a commitment to helping others.

Extract 116: a continuation of the above extract.

> Researcher: If you're going to use a word like dilute then somewhere give the person whose reading it the meaning of dilute. M like you had to give E the meaning of dilute.
>
> Pupil M.D.: She didn't know what it meant.
>
> Researcher: Which is fine – she was big enough to say that she didn't know what it meant and that's why we're here to help her know what it means.

Therefore these various roles of the action partner who mimed the instructions, the speaker, the whispering partner (or brain) and the evaluators and listeners in the audience provided a richer and more diverse learning context and social support network for the pupils. For instance these sessions were beneficial to those pupils who learnt through their bodies. They gave them opportunity to coordinate words and movements in a creative context supported by social cues.

Encouraging Pupils to Make Connections, 'Bridge' and Reinforce Past Work.

Extract 117: The 'less' able.

> Researcher: Good boy J. He's actually using some of the words he's read this morning... Good boy P as well. He's using this! He's making his own connections to what he's read this morning to help him with his spellings.

Pupil J and P made their own connections and the researcher emphasised these flagged the importance of integrating oral, aural, reading and writing together. Unfortunately the tight organisation and prescriptive nature of the Literacy Hour has jeopardized the creative dynamism of these modes. However the researcher was not just encouraging pupils to take responsibility for others learning. The last comment illustrates the importance of 'bridging' on a personal level in order to keep subjectivity intact: "Which is fine – she was big enough to say that she didn't know what it meant and that's why we're here to help her know what it means." It was everyone's role to help create meaning and embrace others in that quest.

Working Unsupervised.

Eventually the researcher asked the groups to prepare instructions oral instructions and later written instructions in their pairs. This was the same task set by the class teacher in Chapter 5. As a group they had prepared a set of oral instructions far exceeding their individual attainment level in writing and beyond the individual oral capabilities. Unfortunately this is type of work is not accredited in the present curriculum.

Extract 118: Preparing instructions with the 'more' able.

> Researcher: I want you to imagine that you are talking to young children of about 3 – 4. You're going into Nursery and giving a very detailed set of instructions on how to brush your teeth properly.
>
> *(Pair – mime and dialogue).*
>
> But talk through it and ignore me when I come round with my camera. Don't leave any gaps in your thinking because as A so rightly said...
>
> Pupil A: They mess!

Researcher: 3 – 4 year olds mess by their very nature.

Pupil A: And they do not do as they are told.

Researcher: And they do not do as they are told.

The pupils were given a clear sense of audience and were told to work on their own whilst the researcher filmed them.

The following extract illustrates many of the features of peer interactive or mutual learning discussed earlier.

Extract 119: A pair from the 'more' able group working unsupervised on preparing a set of instructions on how to wash teeth.

Pupil E: Go to the bathroom and get your tooth brush. Clean it with some water.

Then put some tooth paste on it. *(J miming)*.

Pupil J: You've got to open the lid.

Pupil E: Yeah and then..

Researcher: Oh well done!

Pupil E: You open the lid and then carefully put some on…….

Pupil J: the tooth brush…

Pupil E;…but not too much….

Pupil J:….on the tooth brush.

Pupil E:……..tooth brush but then um *(pause)*.

(J does the movement)

Pupil E:… gently shut the lid on the tube of tooth paste.

Pupil J: Put it down.

Pupil E Put the tooth paste back away in the cup board *(movement)*. Then…

(J putting brush up to mouth)

Pupil E: Put a little bit of water on the tooth paste. Turn the tap off *(movement)*

Um…

(J brushes)

OK. get the brush and clean your teeth really carefully.

The talk was very measured with the speaker talking, thinking and acting at the same time. The speaker's thoughts, words and actions were being regulated by the listener/actor who either stopped miming or prompted thoughts by supplying the next action: "E: Put a little bit of water on the tooth paste. Turn the tap off *(movement)* Um… *(J brushes)*. O.K. get the brush and clean your teeth really carefully." Pupil J who was miming, thinking and noticing the gaps in the language finished off the sentences: "E: You open the lid and then carefully put some on……J: the tooth brush…E;…but not too much…J:….on the tooth brush. E:……..tooth brush but then um *(pause)*. *(J does the movement)*." The two pupils were coordinated in thought, action and language. They were sophisticated evaluators of language and they recognised language has to be purposeful and meaningful. Significantly they were skilled observers of body language reading each others' hesitations and supporting each other with movement and actions.

After the oral work and for the following session they were invited to work in the same pair. This time they had to produce one set of written instructions between them. There was continuity to the lesson but most significantly the timing and structure of the Literacy Hour had been suspended. The groups were given the hour to work on their own.

Responsibility for evaluating written work had been transferred to the pupils:

Extract 120: A pair from the 'more' able group working unsupervised.

Pupil J: We need to put some more detail into….

This expertise extended across working groups.

Extract 121: The 'more' able group working unsupervised.

Pupil D: How do you spell sure?

Pupil J: S – u

Pupil E: Sure?

Pupil D: *(to R)* Is that how you spell sure?

Pupil H: To make sure.

Researcher: That's funny somebody else has said that. Um E?

Pupil E: We just told them.

Pupil J: I just told them.

Researcher: And what did you tell them?

Pupil J and Pupil E: S–u–r–e.

Pupil D: They said a–y.

Pupil R: They said a–y.

Pupil E: No we didn't.

Researcher: Well they heard a 'y' even if you didn't say it. No it's not a 'y' it's 'e' like they said.

Pupil E and J: s–u–r–e.

Pupil D asked the other pair how to spell 'sure'. Pupil D still looked the researcher who holding the camera. The researcher connected pupil D with another pupil who asked same question: "R: That's funny somebody else has said that. Um E?" The researcher held off commenting and attempted to discover what was said. Pupil D contradicted this. Pupils J and E confirmed the answer and not the researcher.

Extract 101: A pair from the 'more' able group working unsupervised.

Pupil A: Put your tooth brush in mouth and brush your teeth but the whole point is they don't know how to!

Researcher: No, and that's the point. That's how they get tooth decay because they're not flicking the food down out of their teeth.

Pupil F: Like this *(movements)*.

Pupil J: *(moving the pencil in his mouth)* They might do this *(pencil just in the mouth and then it moves side–to–side)*.

Researcher: So you've got a responsibility to tell them how to clean their teeth properly. That's right gaps in your thinking because gaps in your thinking will be gaps in their actions. They won't know what to do.

Pupil A had audience awareness: "Put your tooth brush in mouth and brush your teeth but the whole point is they don't know how to!" and a clear sense of the purpose of the writing. Again movement

became important as a way of exploring thoughts through movements: "F: Like this *(movements)*. J: *(moving the pencil in his mouth)* They might do this *(pencil just in the mouth and then it moves side – to – side)*."

After the instructions had been written the pupils were then asked to evaluate their work again:

Extract 102: A pair form the 'more' able group working unsupervised.

Researcher: Right the first thing I want you to do is check your thinking. One of you read and one of you act it out. That will show you whether you've got the stages right.

Pupil D: Take the lid off and put the tooth paste on.

Pupil H: Take the lid off and put the tooth paste on what?

Pupil D: Take the lid off and put the tooth paste on the tooth brush *(Changes it)*.

Pupil H and D were interacting on a level not known previously. Pupil D read whilst pupil H checked the thinking and the language. Pupil D corrected the work in a sophisticated example of year 2 pupils redrafting.

Conclusion.

Chapter 8 has shown that children can adapt their cognitive, personal and interpersonal skills to the particular demands of an intervention. They learnt through the 'guidance' of an adult to use new conceptual tools so that they could sustain this work as a group and eventually as a pair. There is the possibility to take this further and to test the view expounded in the review of the literature that socio-cultural processes are inextricably linked to an individual's development. Perhaps it would be appropriate to track the progress each child or certain children made as an individual. This was not the intention of this study which focused more on the joint nature of learning. However, a future research project might like to provide a summary of the journey made by each child and emphasise the impact of the intervention at an individual level.

The major finding of this study is that more time is needed for children to rehearse their thoughts orally. The disadvantages of children working on their own, away from a supportive social context where

pupils play clear roles, is that pupils have no social cues or feedback. Moreover, these meaningful roles have to be created for children so that they can perform, interpret and evaluate. The audience assesses the performance of their peers whilst sharpening their own knowledge of the task. The performers benefit from the evaluation as it reveals any gaps in their thoughts. Furthermore the context allows something to be redone orally which is less work and less frustrating than having to redraft written work. Starting with the social processes of a task has enormous benefits for the 'less' able as well as the 'able'. In particular children in the early years need this dynamic, supportive learning context.

To return to the title of the thesis this study aimed to transfer some of the responsibility for teaching and learning over to the pupils and to increase the number of participating voices so that pupils had more opportunity to develop their own voices. The transcripts show that this happened to a greater extent after the initiative when pupils were asked to read and respond to SATs papers but not to the same degree as when pupils were asked to create text. The study is suggesting that it is time to take stock of the N.L.S. and the Literacy Hour and to question whether creative opportunities for both practitioner and pupils have been curtailed in the drive for standardization, assessment and individual attainment.

Chapter 10 discusses the practical implications of encouraging 'guided participation' in the classroom.

Chapter 9.

Evaluation.

Introduction.

This chapter will present a critical evaluation of the study, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses at a theoretical and methodological level and raising future lines of enquiry which could lead on from this one.

The Research Questions.

The research questions for the thesis were:

1. Do children work collaboratively during the unsupervised time?

It was found that children did not work collaboratively on a school task when left to their own devices. They either worked on their own, spent time off-task or relied heavily on adult assistance. There were brief instances of peers giving support to each other but these tended to be fleeting and reminiscent of adult/child interactions or peer teaching and did not reveal the sort of negotiation of meaning necessary for peer learning. There was evidence of one group working together but it was totally off-task and driven by the common social purpose and goal of preventing the boys getting the rubber.

2. Does work related speaking and listening during the Literacy Hour facilitate or inhibit peer interactive learning?

The Literacy Hour actually gives pupils the opportunity to work in groups away from the teacher during the unsupervised time. However, the prescribed pedagogy, the organization, the restrictive time limits and the underlying assessment of individual written outcomes mitigated against developing collaborative practices during this time. Moreover, the 'whole' class and 'guided' sessions did not encourage collaborative learning or create the opportunity for children to negotiate meaning. This signaled the need for an adult to create a space that would encourage children to think collaboratively.

3. Does an initiative for peers working collaboratively during the unsupervised of the Literacy Hour increase participating voices?

During the intervention peers were seen to take greater control by talking out loud, questioning, seeking explanations and proof, challenging, evaluating and contributing ideas and thinking simultaneously as a speaker and a listener. There was not the opportunity on this occasion to determine whether these practices were sustainable and whether the children in the target groups could become a learning resource in themselves once they had returned to the classroom.

The Study in Relation to the Literature.

Primarily this study asked questions and provided a specific insight into the recent phenomena of the Literacy Hour. Far from showing active teaching and learning and interactive speaking and listening practices, the Literacy Hour, placed in the present climate of national testing and league tables, reflected teacher dominated interactions, and children working towards individual outcomes rather than towards common negotiated meanings and understandings.

This particular research provided another example of post Vygotskian research in the classroom but unlike the majority of this research it explored the relationship between culture and the development of peer learning, (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 and Crook, 1999 and 2000). It extended the work of Mercer et al (2000) and Kampulainen & Kaartinen (2000) by expanding our understanding of the multi-layered context, local, institutional and national setting as well as personal and social relationships, in which peer learning is set. The study applauds the active participation of the child (Rogoff, 1990) but also wanted to portray context as an active force influencing interaction. The context of teaching and learning was presented as having an active role in regulating classroom interactions. It was this cultural code and how it regulated the way the teacher and the pupils participated during the Literacy Hour which was of interest in this study. Teachers and pupils were discussed as only fill existing roles in the cultural climate of the classroom and, in terms of the Literacy Hour, these roles were seen to be limiting. It is suggested that these roles in the immediate setting of the school may also have repercussions for the roles adopted in the wider society. That is precisely why an analysis of the context of learning and teaching is so desperately needed, (Bronfebrenner, 1979) and why the researcher thought it would be helpful to change the cultural code through group work.

There was no attempt at measuring the individual, cognitive benefits of peers working together as in

Mercer et als' work, 2000. The focus of the thesis was on process and the social participation of pupils in meaningful activities. Neither was there an attempt to create a closed learning event severed from the other events of the classroom as this would be counter productive to the sort of participation and engagement required. A future line of research would be to see how these target groups then use these mutual learning resources in the wider context of the classroom and become a learning resource themselves. Moreover, further studies are needed to continue the exploration of the dynamic and continuous interplay between learners and their environment.

The importance of the adult as 'guide' is quintessential to the theory of 'guided participation'. Theorists such as Rogoff (1990) place the child in an important role as an active negotiator and participant during these 'guided' interactions and cultural practices. However, the roles that the adult/teacher and child/pupil assume in the classroom are at issue in this thesis. Rogoff's theory of 'guided participation' does not do justice to the often messy, conflicting, contradictory and problematic relationship between the individual and the environment. Teachers and pupils are positioned in certain ways and assume roles which govern their status as participants in their learning community. They might have different ideas about what is relevant and worth knowing and doing. Interestingly, neither teachers nor pupils are allowed to participate fully in lessons. Both teachers and pupils are restricted by curriculum demands, time limits and assessment demands. Neither adult or child experience the Literacy Hour in a purposeful way or fully experience the emotion of participation so characteristic of the socio-cultural concepts of 'guided participation'. The Literacy Hour does not seem to create an intersubjective space where children can feel dialectically connected to their teacher, to the subject matter or to each other. Thus pupils have no sense of identity as an active participant who engages in authentic, meaningful learning.

Schools have a clear role to design a space where pupils can engage meaningfully with the curriculum. In fact this thesis actually looked to minimize the role of the adult and teaching in an attempt to maximize learning and facilitate the processes of negotiation of meaning during interaction. The thesis actually gave status to pupils actively learning from each other and actively influencing their cultural environment.

The type of ground rules featuring in Chapter 5 were seen as having a limited application in certain

situations. Providing 'ground rules' as cultural tools does not determine or cause action in some kind of static or mechanical way. Individuals have to use them and use them across a variety of contexts. The researcher called for the creation of a context where conflict, purpose, reflection and choice are dynamically interrelated. Peer learning opened up the way to greater diversity of interpretations and ambiguities and the classroom needed to utilise these by organizing the appropriate space. A dramatic space was required where action could be organized in a dialectic and complex way and this involved the children taking on different actual and imaginary roles as speakers and listeners. It is through these different roles that children construct, modify and evaluate theirs and others understanding. Moreover, it is through the teacher becoming aware of the complex, contradictory and conflicting ways they and the children relate to each other and their environment, that enables the teacher to modify and evaluate theirs and the pupils' relationships and understanding, more powerfully and less one-sidedly.

Furthermore, the thesis reinstated conflict in a Piagetian sense as providing 'pivotal' moments which moved pupils not only towards a better understanding on a linguistic and intellectual level but on a personal and interpersonal level as well. It was during spontaneous learning settings rather than contrived ones that these moments of conflict were invaluable. Pupils were invited to develop greater self-awareness of themselves and of others. These occasions were useful to the teacher as well as they provide a window to the pupils' social and cultural framework of reference which might be at odds with the teacher's understanding of the intentions of the school task. It is this area of the thesis which promises to be the most exciting. Looking at development in a social and cultural context may provide an insight into the variation in pupil performance within and across social and cultural communities which help address certain equality issues. One of these areas not addressed in this thesis are other personal and social issues that pertain to talk such as gender. The grouping, subject matter or context may make female or male pupils reluctant to talk or have personal and social repercussions where the pupils may feel less valued in a certain group setting and unable to communicate effectively.

The Methodology.

The Scale of the Study.

This study was committed to observing social processes in a particular context and as a result its scale might seem narrow. One class was observed with a particular focus on 10 children. Therefore critics

might argue that the findings are difficult to generalize from such a small sample. The thesis does not claim to provide generalisable and universal truths. The findings are tied to a particular cultural, institutional and historical setting. Therefore there would be enormous benefits for other studies to replicate this one in other contexts so that their findings could enrich this one by exploring further accidental and unanticipated effects in other settings. This thesis possesses rich layers of context which gives the study a depth and authenticity that acknowledges wider institutional and social concerns. In doing this the study gives a rounder picture of the child in keeping with a socio-cultural perspective of the child as a doer, speaker, listener, and thinker with a dynamic combination of personal and social concerns. The thesis also gives the child psychological force by perceiving the participants as residing in richly layered and interconnected contexts. The one context that could be explored in future research, however, is that of the home and the transition from home to school regarding interpersonal expectations.

To return to widening the scale of the study there is also scope to conduct a longitudinal study. This would determine whether the results of the intervention were sustainable. This would involve tracking groups of pupils from Nursery, through Key Stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 and noting the changes in intervention and pupil approaches, behaviour and skills. This would provide a theory of peer learning which spans across the school years and provides practitioners with the sort criteria for developing collaborative practices that is much needed.

It might be argued that the scale of the study could be narrowed even further with the close observation of one individual's introduction to collaborative practices during the Literacy Hour. This would lead to a closer examination of how there is a subtle interplay between the social situation and an individual's performance, functioning, behaviour and development. This would give a greater insight into how changes in a child's abilities, temperament, health etc may become major triggers that effect the teaching and learning environment and visa-versa. However, this thesis wished to move away from a focus on individual attainment and towards group processes.

The Context.

It might be argued that the initiative might have been easier to implement and the findings might have been more positive under less restrictive circumstances. The study took place during a SATs year with

a teacher clearly focused on raising the academic attainment of her class. However, the thesis was an exploratory journey involving the patient observation of the 'real-life' classroom. The researcher rejected a more active role and resisted 'controlling' the vast array of complex factors which formed the context. Furthermore, the researcher attests that there is as much value in studying the restrictions and limitations of a context which impede collaboration as there is observing those features which facilitate it. When planning and analysing for new forms of mediation, the focus is typically on how perceived constraints inherent in existing forms of mediation will inhibit or facilitate new practices or indeed how these restraints can be overcome. Furthermore, the researcher chose these circumstances because it was felt they would give the study more credibility with practitioners. It was important for the researcher to be seen working with the same extreme restraints and demands as the teachers. These constraints such as power relations can not be easily overthrown but they can be combined in new ways or modified. The researcher too was seen as fallible perpetuating the same practices as they sought to overthrow. Any changes had more credibility because they sprang from managing authentic situations in the classroom and therefore were real indications that practices could be altered in the classroom.

The Role of the Researcher:

The role of the researcher as the provider of training was given a high profile in the study. However, the role of the researcher had its own advantages and disadvantages. The advantages were that that the children were open and relaxed with the researcher and felt less daunted by challenging this particular adult. However, it could be argued that this is precisely the relational context needed to facilitate mutual learning, away from the restrictions of traditional adult/child roles. This has implications for the traditional authority role of the teacher or for an alternative, additional adult to support peer learning. The disadvantages were that the researcher had limited power to influence discourse in a sustainable way in the classroom. The researcher did not have the same recourse to the reward and punishment systems and lacked the impact of the assessor of classroom practices which would have turned the classroom into a social and physical environment that supported and rewarded collaborative practices. This would also have been easier with the support of the teacher. The children in the target groups acquired a new way of working but the teacher did not embrace this. The initiative was intended to be a 'whole' class initiative rather than affecting just certain groups. This would have resulted in a greater continuity between the values being encouraged during the initiative and the dominant values of the classroom. Ideally the practitioner/researcher has more opportunity to influence the day-to-day

running of the classroom. However, at an institutional level, the researcher was a Parent Governor and thinking skills were on the agenda for 2002-2003 and the development of speaking and listening on the agenda for 2003-2004.

The thesis values voices but the teacher's voice is sadly absent from the analysis. It could be argued that the analysis is dominated by the researcher's own conceptual understandings of the situation as the teacher chose not to enter into any dialogue about the project. The thesis is, however, informed by the other voices from the literature and from the children themselves. The transcripts are perceived as pupils' scripts which govern a particular activity. The researcher also tried to be self-critical and by adopting an action research approach a cycle of reflection was built in. However in future it would be interesting to conduct a study where the researcher worked in close partnership with the teacher and to involve the reflective voice of the practitioner.

A more exciting prospect, and one in which this study only went part way, is for the researcher to work more closely with children and involve them in the evaluation of the research as co-partners in this social endeavour. This is the biggest challenge for research concerned with intersubjective theory "to create psychological theories that are as useful for the children in organizing their learning and managing their lives as they are for the adults that work with them," (Bruner, 1996, page 64.) This has implications for Action Research as it has the potential for helping pupils to become metacognitive and to involve pupils in the research process as agents of change.

The Design.

Critics of the study might press for some 'proof' that the initiative provided individual benefits for some pupils. Quintessentially the study wanted to move away from outcome driven research and the measuring of cognitive gains and towards the understanding of *processes* which facilitate collaborative learning.

A positivist approach would have adopted an experimental approach involving the three step design of individual pre- and post tests. There would have been a sharper contrast between the unsupervised groups studied during the pilot study and those studied at the end of the main study. Hard quantitative data would have been collected to monitor the differences between the instances of, for example, joint

collaboration pre and post the intervention. The sample might also have been broadened to include the monitoring of those who had been exposed the intervention and those who had not. Thus those researchers concerned with measuring outcomes could compare and contrast the gains from the comparative target groups. However the methodology for this particular study has arisen out of the research questions and these are not concerned with individual cognitive gains and outcomes. A methodology was needed that would facilitate the exploration of the social and cultural processes of development and be flexible enough to support the gradual change in classroom behaviour.

The strength of the methodology was that it was a practical and contextualised form of rationality and not a scientific approach which applied a simple means/ends basis of addressing a situation. The researcher was not looking for a set of rules to be applied but more an 'answer' to *how* people might act in a certain situation and the physical as well as the psychological restraints that might facilitate or impede them. This was an interpretative process or reflection-in-action and, therefore, required the researcher coping with uncertainty, shaping change and interpreting and responding to a particular situation. Each set of circumstances would dynamic and transactive with subtle differences in context, history and personal and social relationships. Therefore, a methodology was needed that was multi-layered and united different forms of analysis, (Kumpulainen & Kaartinen, 2000).

The thesis might also seem to lack clear guidelines for designing a collaborative working space or for providing a set of comprehensive 'ground rules' for encouraging an ideal speech type, such as 'exploratory' talk. This research is not claiming to present an ideal design. The dynamic ebb and flow of peer interaction is shaped by personal, historical, cultural, social, institutional and interpersonal forces that have little to do with an ideal design.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, this thesis is not claiming to give a complete picture of the social context of development, only to contribute to the continuing and very compelling story of the role that social experience plays in the process of development. This thesis emphasises the importance of 'bridging' or fit in terms of maintaining and sustaining mutuality. This is not only important in terms of the adult and child 'bridging' but also peers keeping intersubjectivity intact. The area in which this thesis has broken new ground is in the way it looked at how cultural processes inhibited or facilitated peer learning in social

context. The way forward is to see how these skills transfer from one context to another. This is different from the majority research which tends to observe how individuals perform better at a set task. This future line of research for this thesis is to focus on how social practices transfer to a different context over a longer period of time. The context of this could be widened to include greater community influences.

The next chapter will discuss the practical implications of the study.

Chapter 10 – Implications for Educational Practice.

Introduction.

With the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy the teaching profession has witnessed an unprecedented provision of comprehensive support, training materials and resources. The literacy curriculum and methodology have become highly prescriptive and the expectation is that all pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 will be taught a daily Literacy Hour that requires teachers to respond to pupils' diverse learning needs.

The National Literacy Strategy is now into its fifth year. Claims have been made that along with the Literacy Hour the N.L.S. has transformed the quality of teaching in Primary Schools. In the Foreword of The National Literacy Strategy (2001) Baroness Catherine Ashton, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Early Years and School Standards, makes grand claims, spoken with a confident voice, that the new drive for improving literacy standards in the early years has "… given even more children the foundations in literacy that will equip them for life.," (page 1). The study sought to question whether the implementation of the N.L.S and the Literacy Hour has improved the quality of teaching and learning in the early years and whether children are "… leaving primary school with the essential skills they need," (page 1). This chapter offers the conclusions from the study.

Encouraging Voices.

The study maintains the roles that the Literacy Hour positions both pupils and teacher as speakers and listeners are limiting. The study would urge a greater focus on the social processes of learning that takes place through talking and listening during the Literacy Hour and to consider whether the present climate supports all their pupils. This study concludes that the pressures of the N.L.S., the Literacy Hour and the SATs have marginalized speaking and listening. Behind this is a system of testing which over emphasises written outcomes. If other practitioners conclude the same then procedures may be needed to put in place so that pupils, teachers and classes have the time to develop oracy skills. This is a daunting task for an individual practitioner so it is suggested that such an initiative requires a whole school initiative.

The Teacher's Voice.

There would be great value in pooling together all the different voices and experiences of the staff. Some of these voices would be newly qualified whilst others will draw upon previously existing good practice in order to evaluate whether the N.L.S. facilitates comprehensive speaking and listening practices. The value of developing speaking and listening as a whole school policy is that teachers can build up theories of the value of talk in classrooms. Practitioners can explore what they think a Literacy curriculum, with respect to speaking and listening, might deliver and whether the N.L.S. encompasses all their oracy requirements. The next step would then be to assess whether the Literacy Hour with its prescriptions, role allocations and rigid time allocations allows for both teachers and pupils to be spontaneous, flexible and creative speakers and listeners during Literacy.

Significantly involving practitioners in raising the importance of speaking and listening increases the likelihood of the teacher taking an active interest in the assessment of these modes of delivery. Teachers might become conscious of the inhibiting and facilitating nature of their *own* speaking and listening practices and the influence of their *own* voice on classroom interactions. As the study has testified typical teaching exchanges often limit the roles pupils can adopt as speakers and listeners. Much classroom talk runs down habitual channels. With new insight teachers can take on new roles, allowing greater flexibility in class areas where language is being used by pupils as a tool to come to terms with new information, to make sense of it and to make it their own. As the study has shown, teachers greatly influence the quality of talk by the nature and timing of their interventions and their willingness to encourage and incorporate what children say. If pupils are really listened to, responded to, and if they have the space and time and speak about the work they are doing, then it should be possible for much more meaningful activity to take place.

The Children's Voices.

With a heightened awareness of their professional voice the practitioner might then champion the voices of the children. The study suggests that practitioners look at the provision for speaking and listening in the classroom and to place oracy on the curriculum map. The study illustrated how talk gave many pupils, the 'more' and 'less' able groups, greater access to the curriculum. It offered the teacher a fuller picture of the children's attainment on instructions than was revealed by the written

homework alone. It gave the teacher an insight into how the pupils learnt and perhaps offered a better opportunity of meeting pupils' diverse learning needs. Similar to the study, schools might like to evaluate the teacher and pupil interactions in the 'whole' class and 'guided' sessions and the peer interactions in the unsupervised groups. This affords the staff the opportunity to decide the sort of speaking and listening skills they expect pupils to use during these sessions and how best to facilitate them. For instance the staff might agree to monitor questioning during the 'whole' class session, asking for explanations during the 'guided' sessions and reporting back in the plenary. Practitioners might like to consider whether there are sufficient opportunities for pupils to deliver work orally and to build confidence as speakers before they commit their thoughts to writing. This works on the premise that talk is a way of 'working on understanding' (to use Douglas Barnes' phrase, 1979).

Changes to Role Allocations and Time Limits.

The time restrictions and the expected roles played by both teacher and pupils during the Literacy Hour might need to be waived. For instance when pupils are invited to work together in small groups the teacher is tied to a 'guided' writing or reading group. Scant guidance is offered to these groups on how to work together and think together and on the roles they should adopt as speaker, listener, whispering partner etc.

In addition the N.L.S. makes no suggestions that the 'guided' sessions should be 'guided' oracy sessions. Early Years classrooms (as well as all Key Stages) might deem it necessary to devote entire Literacy Hours to speaking and listening and encourage children to see talk as a vital part of working, learning and thinking together.

Furthermore the ten minute limit for the plenary might seem too tight and wrongly placed at the end of the session. Teachers might find it necessary to build in regular stop gaps so that time can be given to pupils to think and reflect on what they have learned and how they went about it and so extending the skills to become better speakers and listeners.

It might be necessary to make the 'whole' class session more flexible with greater and longer interaction between pupils being encouraged. Furthermore, there is no reason why the teacher and the

assistant should not run the first part of the Literacy Hour concurrently with separate groups. Those pupils who find it difficult to sustain long amounts of time listening to the teacher would be in a smaller group with more opportunity to work visually or kinesthetically. The two groups could then report back to each other.

'Guidance',

The study concluded that children ought to be supported when developing their speaking and listening. Educationalists are asking them to take risks and to go beyond reading a teacher's mind or a teacher's face for clues to the right answer. For many pupils they may feel that they are putting themselves on the line intellectually, linguistically, socially and emotionally. As a result it is vitally important that there is a 'guide' to offer them support and to empower them with the necessary skills to make sense of the tasks. The study recommends that this support needs to be increased in the Early Years and for those pupils who are challenged on an academic, linguistic, social and emotional level.

This 'guidance' is ultimately the responsibility of the adult's in the classroom but it is not exclusive to adults. Pupils too can work in small collaborative groups so that more networks are created to support teaching and learning. However such 'guidance' is lamentably absent from any directives in the N.L.S.

Children Working Together.

The study illustrated that productive speaking and listening is essentially a cooperative activity as talk is usually a dialogue. The study would encourage teachers of the early years to determine whether in a drive for standards and individual out comes pupils have had sufficient opportunity to work collaboratively on projects with other pupils. The small, collaborative group work discussed in chapter 7 and 8 illustrated how this type of work helped pupils to come to terms with ideas they were trying to understand and to communicate to other people. Speaking and listening became as much about facilitating the words of others as it was about speaking oneself. It became apparent that it was important that pupils were encouraged, as part of their learning process, to put their thoughts into words and explore them with others so that their understanding could be challenged, shared and consolidated. Children working together involved them making choices. These choices would be when to work

alone, when to seek a partner or group to share ideas with, when to talk with the teacher, when to work with a whispering partner and when to work as the audience. Choices were also about which information to select, how to phrase an answer or how to reach agreement. Moreover collaborative working practices were a useful way of encouraging children to take risks, personal and social ones as well as intellectual ones. It provided them with feedback (which was not necessarily tacked onto the end of the lesson in the form of a plenary) so that children could return to their work with fresh ideas and coping strategies.

Personal and Interpersonal Skills.

Returning to the earlier quote of the Under-Secretary of State for Early Years and School Standards claiming that the N.L.S has "… given even more children the foundations in literacy that will equip them for life" it is important to determine whether the literacy strategy in schools has equipped children with vital personal and interpersonal skills necessary to communicate in a varied and challenging world. This study found that social and personal areas of the literacy curriculum and of a child's development were being marginalized especially in the area of interpersonal development and emotional literacy. The study suggests that adults might be concerned with how each pupil works with their peers: their listening and responding, their confidence in addressing others, their confidence in challenging, explaining and giving proof, their contribution to the group, etc. This gives a more balanced and holistic picture of the child. Significantly the study found that working with others and speaking and listening with others a richly rewarding experience. Perhaps working in a small, supportive network is vital to our well-being and is in need of reviving and fostering.

Implications for Planning and Assessment and the Development of the Professional Voice.

One of the major findings of the study was that there was a need for managed interaction in the development of speaking and listening strategies which met the social, linguistic and intellectual demands of the classroom. Talk which offered pupils alternative patterns of communication had to be planned for and assessed. The N.L.S. tries to make maximum use of the teacher's time. The down side of this is that practitioners have little opportunity to stand back and observe their own interactions with children as well as monitoring the children's interaction with each other. This might lead to practitioners considering how lessons should be monitored and evaluated under such restrictions. Practitioners might be concerned over the assessment of speaking and listening and this might be equaled only by

the anxiety of teachers as to how such assessment 'fits' with the demands and the 'objective' standards of the SATs. Questions that teachers might like to ask are: what are they being asked to assess, how are they going to go about assessing it and when and where should the assessment take place? Practitioners might also feel anxious to know how they are going to fit in the assessment of speaking and listening in an already rigorous system of assessment (especially in Year 2). There is the practicalities of gathering samples of each child's work whether as recorded talking and listening on tape or as a number of observations noted and written up in some form. Each piece of evidence might need some annotations: date, context, grouping, role, teacher 'guidance', perhaps. This is an onerous task and has implications for the funding of additional help in the classroom and the additional resources such as tape recorders.

The Literacy Coordinator might observe and take notes and then present these to the classroom teacher. The study concludes that more beneficial to the practitioner would be the adoption of the role as researcher practitioner. This would involve the recording of exchanges with subsequent transcription and analysis of the interactions at a later date so that the teacher would engage with the material in a reflective cycle of analysis and modification. However this process is time consuming and often isolating so the named practitioner could be assigned an assistant or given extra time to address these concerns. The benefits for the practitioner are significant as it allows the teacher to have ownership over their own learning and development. At best it helps them to gain more control and autonomy over the processes in their classroom which, it might argued, have been eroded in recent years. This sort of exploration would then need to be shared with the rest of the staff in order to heighten other practitioners' awareness of the speaking and listening practices in their classroom. At its best this sort of endeavor is empowering and might result in the teacher gaining more control and autonomy over the rediscovery and development of their own professional voice. Perhaps only a whole school approach to oracy would create the necessary environment where talk is valued. But nothing can successfully become whole-school policy unless the head teacher is prepared to 'guide' participation and to be fully committed to fund it.

Essential Literacy Skills.

This study has dealt with the Literacy Hour but there is no reason why talk-related activities at all ages in

all areas of the curriculum should not be encouraged. To promote speaking and listening the sort of climate that is needed is where:

- ✓ Process is valued.
- ✓ Tentative exploration is seen as important.
- ✓ Pupils work in small supportive groups.
- ✓ There are opportunities to share, reflect and rework ideas.
- ✓ Pupils are encouraged to draw on previous experiences both in and beyond school.
- ✓ Problems raised by pupils are integrated into the work of the class.

During the initiative, especially during discussions of past SATs papers, the researcher encouraged the essential literacy skills of developing pupils who have clearer thoughts and logical powers and who challenge themselves and others by predicting and hypothesizing. Children were asked to speak purposefully for intellectual and social reasons in the belief that those children who are competent, confident speakers and listeners gain the most from their education and have a positive self image.

The monitoring of speaking and listening might seem a formidable task for the teachers of infants. However it is debatable whether we can continue to support a system where the social significance of talk is not valued. The study has argued that if knowledge is to be useful, if it is to mean anything at all, then each child must make it his or her own. This means doing something with it, taking it further by talking about it, using it for writing or performance. Not always in lonely isolation and not always in a 'whole' class session, where mistakes take on such magnitude, but sometimes in small groups of children who can help each other to understand, to plan, make, design and so on. It is argued that these same groups can help each other to read and write too, for although these activities can be done individually, they can be made easier, more interesting and more enjoyable by being shared.

Furthermore, problematic and difficult as it is, the assessment of talk gives new insight into pupils' learning and development. Perhaps, most significantly, the study contends that the assessment of group talk gives a truer picture of the pupils' potential attainment. Ultimately the notion of 'guided participation' presented in this study argues that participants have a responsibility to increase the number of contributing voices in the classroom in a bid to value each person's unique contribution. Otherwise we might witness a generation of children and teachers who feel that their voice does not make a

worthwhile contribution to society. These voices have to be reflective as the study contends that reflection is a key skill for developing members of a changing society.

This study claims that the pressures of the N.L.S., the Literacy Hour and the SATs have marginalized speaking and listening and peer collaborative practices in their classrooms. The major implication of this study is the reinstatement of oracy on the curriculum map. This should in turn lead to a change in speaking and listening practices during literacy with greater awareness of the skills and roles adopted by pupils and teachers during dialogue. There should also be a revision of the rigid time structure of the Literacy Hour and to a revision of the over emphasis on the assessment of individual, written out comes. These implications have relevance across the school age range but nowhere is it more pressing than with those children who are just entering school and forming their first impressions of what it is to do Literacy.

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Appendix 1:

Appendix 1 shows the variety of transcripts used in the analysis There are examples from:

1. The beginning of the study where the unsupervised session was observed. (Research Question 1).
2. An example from field notes of the 'whole' class session when the context of the study started to widen. (Research Question 2).
3. Two detailed examples from the 'whole' class sessions of Show 'n' Tell and the Literacy Hour. (Research Question2).
4. An example from the 'guided' sessions when it became apparent that the researcher had to become a participant and adopt an interventionist stance. (Research Question 3).
5. A final transcript at the end of the intervention when the research came full cycle and the pupils were observed post-intervention during the unsupervised time. (Research Questions 1 and 3).

The transcripts are high-lighted in the following ways:

- **Key:**
- **Significant script high-lighted in**
- **Analysis high-lighted in**

There are two broad areas of interests:

- **Inhibiting features e.g. dependency on adult/text high-lighted in**
- **Facilitating features e.g. requirement to talk/think out loud or making connections with others high-lighted in.**

Detailed examples of the analytic frameworks for group interaction and for the restrictions of the context are on pages: xiv – xx.

Analytic Framework for group interaction.

Discourse Analysis:

Relationships:	▪ Over reliance on teacher. ▪ The status of voice in relationships ▪ Primacy of the individual ▪ No sharing ▪ Teacher/Pupil dominating work ▪ Unequal participation ▪ Conflict left unresolved	✓ Children asking own questions of each other ✓ Making connections or 'bridging' their comments with those of others ✓ Making their own choices of whom to work with ✓ Being open to the ideas of others ✓ Working in a positive, encouraging and inclusive way to ensure equal participation ✓ Showing a mutual concern for each others' learning ✓ Adopting a variety of roles to keep pupils

:

		✓ engaged with the task and the relationship at hand ✓ Being aware of the social purposes of the task
Text:	▪ Over dependence on text ▪ Text as resource and assuming dominant status ▪ No joint meaning making	✓ Children asking their own questions of the text ✓ Making connections or 'bridging' their comments with other knowledge areas. ✓ Making their own choices of how to work and which resources to use ✓ Planning and evaluating their own work in accordance with an agreed set of criteria ✓ Involved in the joint construction

		of text and meaning making i.e. text as process ✓ Revising text
<u>Discourse:</u>	▪ Thinking and talking as separate ▪ Off-task talk ▪ Social conventions mitigate against peer collaboration	✓ Aware of the value of talk ✓ Children seeking an giving explanations ✓ Analysing the strengths and weaknesses of theirs and others' contributions ✓ Instigating and managing conflict ✓ Seeking consensus or a compromise ✓ Providing information ✓ Explaining ✓ Evaluating ✓ Asking and answering questions

- ✓ Expressing agreement/disagreement
- ✓ Seeking or giving justification

An Analytic Framework of the Restrictions in the Social, Cultural, and Historic Context.

Grounded Theory:

National Context:

The National Literacy Strategy and the Literacy Hour:

- time limits
- prescriptive curriculum
- underpinning individual assessment and individual out comes
- two thirds of time teacher directed
- teacher accountability
- SATs tests
- children to work in unsupervised groups without recourse to the teacher
- children organised into ability groups
- absence of speaking and listening on curriculum map

Whole School Context:

- Ofsted recommended that school planned to monitor Speaking and Listening and P.S.H.E. in their School Improvement Plan.

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Immediate Context of the Classroom:

The following restrictions were noted through a thematic analysis:

- restrictions on sample
- SATs
- time restrictions
- restrictions imposed by texts
- restrictions of giving primacy to the individual and of being able to complete a task alone
- restriction of helping perceived as babyish or copying
- competition
- division of labour
- the authoritarian stance
- rigid turn-taking patterns
- assertion and counter assertion
- restrictions of streaming by ability
- difficulty of task
- dependency on adult

The following initiatives were trialled:

- ✓ Setting different relationships in the classroom:
- ✓ Encouraging children to adopt different roles: speaker, listener, audience, whispering partner and to work with other people
- ✓ Challenging adult/pupil relationship
- ✓ Challenging pupils relationship with each other
- ✓ Casting the pupil as expert
- ✓ Encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own and others' learning
- ✓ Involving pupils in the assessment of their own and others' work
- ✓ Encouraging pupils to take control of resources
- ✓ 'Bridging ideas'
- ✓ Spend the entire hour on speaking and listening
- ✓ Delaying writing

- ✓ Inviting and resolving conflict
- ✓ Valuing alternative ways of judging the success of the task e.g.
- ✓ P.S.H.E: Pupils as helpers
- ✓ Valuing group discussion
- ✓ Valuing inclusion and joint ownership
- ✓ Valuing process

Example 1:

- **This is a partial transcription of a 20 minute observation of the unsupervised session, which was videotaped to determine whether the pupils worked co-operatively during this time.**
- **The Researcher was a non-participant.**
- **The class teacher grouped the pupils according to ability.**
- **This transcript features the 'more' able group: Five girls and two boys.**
- **The task, set by the teacher, was to write about their grandparents and to produce individual pieces of work.**
- **The pupils were introduced to the work during the 'whole' class session.**
- **The resources were: the teacher (although the unsupervised group was supposed to work with out recourse to the teacher as suggested by the N.L.S.), the text on the white board, individual spelling books, pencils, sharpeners and rubbers.**

Key: Significant script high-lighted in Avoidance high-lighted in Analysis high-lighted in Dependency on adult/text high-lighted in Requirement to talk/think out loud high-lighted inor making connections with others.

E: (*looking at book brought from home*). **Off – task.**

T: (*loudly*) El. J. E., you put that away!

Four pupils present at table. (E.J. putting book away, Cl. and T. away from table). **Off – task.** Remaining 4 (H., C., D. and J.) looking at the board. Table pos. by board. Pupils heavily dependent on text. Board has D's and M's replies to the teacher's questions during the whole class session, written in full sentences. It reads:

My grandma has white hair and blue eyes. I like to play with my lorry with Grandma.

My grandfather has white hair and blue eyes. He has a hat. He plays with me.

H: My grandmo..mum…mother (***mouths to herself***). Pupil heavily dependent on text. trying to make sense of what is on the board in her own terms. Perhaps this is an unfamiliar term – not the way the pupil addresses their grandparent.

T. moves from table to get rubber. H. moves from table for sharpener pencil. 3 still present. Avoidance strategies. *Continue to copy from board. H returns. 4 at table.* Dependence on the board/teacher.

H: (*returns and looks at board*) My grandmother has wh… (*starts to rub out writing*).

T. returns Constant moving away, returning and being off-task. T. and H. using rubbers – suggestion of tension about 'getting things right' – standard set by the teacher's writing on the board.

C: …u,e…u,e… (*looks at board*) My grandma has blue eyes.

Meanwhile, T. looking at pencils and different sizes of two. H. moves and E.J returns.

Constant moving away, returning and being off-task

E: This is mine (looking at her book from home, Goldilocks and the Three Bears).

C. returns.

E: (*looking at book*) It's a very long story.

Boys move. H. looking at board. D. at the board with a member of O. group.

J.F. (***talking to D.*** *and then to me*) Is that Grandma? Pupil asks question! Referred to an 'authority'.

Pupil: (someone shouts from y. group) Yeah, that's Grandma.

Back at table. D. and C. at board. E.J., T., Cl. and H. at table. H. persevering. C. rocking. T. flipping book. E.J. moves. D. and C. still look at board. C. moves.

H: (*asking Cl.*) Does this say **My mum or grandmother?** Knowledge is not pooled together. Each individual struggling

*Meanwhile E.J. **returned with rubber.***

E.S.Weatherby. M7158158. Ringing with Voices: 'Guide Participation' During the Literacy Hour. EdD. 2004.

Example 2:

It was at this stage of the study that the researcher decided to broaden the context of the thesis and observe the 'whole' class session of the Literacy Hour. This is the end section of field notes concerned with teacher/pupil questions, teacher /pupil responses and 'bridging'.

Teacher's Questions	Pupils' Response	Pupils' Questions	Teacher's response to pupil questions.	Teacher 'bridging' between pupils	Pupils 'bridging' with each other.
✓	Class				
✓	Class				
✓	Girl				
✓	Repeat				
✓	Boy				
✓	Boy				
✓					
Recapped and put story together. Included four children from class, miming					
34 teacher Questions in total.	**41 replies– 11 'whole class.**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0** **1 connection with text and relating to an earlier question raised by teacher.**

Example 3:

A more thorough analysis of the 'whole' class session had to be conducted to produce the analytic frameworks featuring of pages xiv - xx. The 'whole' class sessions during Circle Time, Show 'n' Tell and the Literacy Hour were observed. At this stage the researcher sought to 'guide' the participation of the practitioner. The presentation of the transcripts changed as they were meant to be seen by the practitioner and prompt a dialogue between the researcher and the practitioner. The following example is part of a transcription of Show 'n' Tell where a pupil *chose* to present a set of instructions.

O:	I made this! *(close to teacher and turned to teacher)*	Body language turned into the teacher.——— ——— ———
Teacher:	Oh, right. Are you going to tell us how you made it?	—A wonderful attempt at instructions. This could be built on.———Ask for volunteer to carry out/mime instructions.—-To get children to work in pairs (A and B). A teach B how to build a bridge out of Lego or A to hide something and give B instructions on how to find it. When class confident, get class to watch and evaluate a pupil's set of instructions in a sensitive way.———
O:	*(turned into teacher)* I have to put beads *(moves hands)* on plastic urn shape. I've got stars and squares and hearts and you put all different beads on and when you've finished you. . . there's this tracing paper and you have to put it on and iron it and then you have to take the plastic thing off.	
Teacher:	Oh, very good. So you have to iron it to make it stay in shape. I think H. has a question for you.	

H:	I've got one but I leave it for a bit because it might be quite hot so I leave it for a bit and then I come back to it and then I take it off…	H. asks question but no direct reference to O.——————— ——————.——————— ———————
O:	*(looking at teacher and speaking softly)* *(inaudible)*……put to face.	O's response to teacher. —— ——————————— ———————
Teacher:	Oh, oh right	

Example 4:

This is part of a transcript from the 'whole' class session of the Literacy Hour on Instructions.

Teacher:	That's why you've marked it! That's why you've marked it! So now, you can take the sock off and you can use both hands…	Answers question.
Pupil:	…to stick on…	Pupil finishes sentence – Is this one way of orchestrating 'w.c.' response?
Teacher:	…to stick the different things on. Right after that, let's look at our next instruction.	Pupil intervenes. How can we best weave pupils' contributions into the main conversation?
S:	Mrs T. you missed the tongue…	A reminder of the authority of the text.
Teacher:	Well….	
S:	…and you missed the whiskers.	
Teacher:	Yeah, we can do that later can't we. We can add those details later. We're following our instructions	

Example 5:

The next example features a transcript from the Interventionist Stage of the study when the researcher 'guided' the target groups in ways of working, thinking and talking together.

Researcher: Yeah, you can start. Look at your pieces of paper. You've all done a bit of work on it Right, what's Freya doing? So it's a constant reading and writing thing that you're doing. Right, you've nominated somebody to write . You two are talking and reading. Are you checking your answers as well David? Keep talking to each other. You don't have to agree with people. Who did Morris hope to meet? Do you remember? Who was he looking for?

E.D. His Mum.

A: Who did Morris hope to meet?

R: E.D.'s got an idea haven't you E.? Listen to E. even if what she says is not 'right' she can still contribute her sentence, can't she. Excellent. You worked well together and you did your research at home. Right Chapter 4. *(Reads).*

R: Give him the page number, *(reads)* ….cat flap.

Freya: He wanted his food.

R: That's it. He wanted his food. He likes his food. (*Reads*)…ears.

E.D. *(inaudible - reads).*

R: Hold on E. just wants to contribute something. What do you want to say?

This was one instance when they all came with prior knowledge of the text – reduced any incompatibility.

Introducing different vocabulary: nominated, talking, checking, agree – different way of working as a group.

Emphasising the importance of talk. Trying to integrate reading, talking and writing as a joint task.

Pupil directing question at R.

R. directs it to pupil – trying to 'bridge' ides and make pupils connect.

Trying to transfer skills: asking them to be aware of each others' work and being responsible for assessing oral work as well as written work.

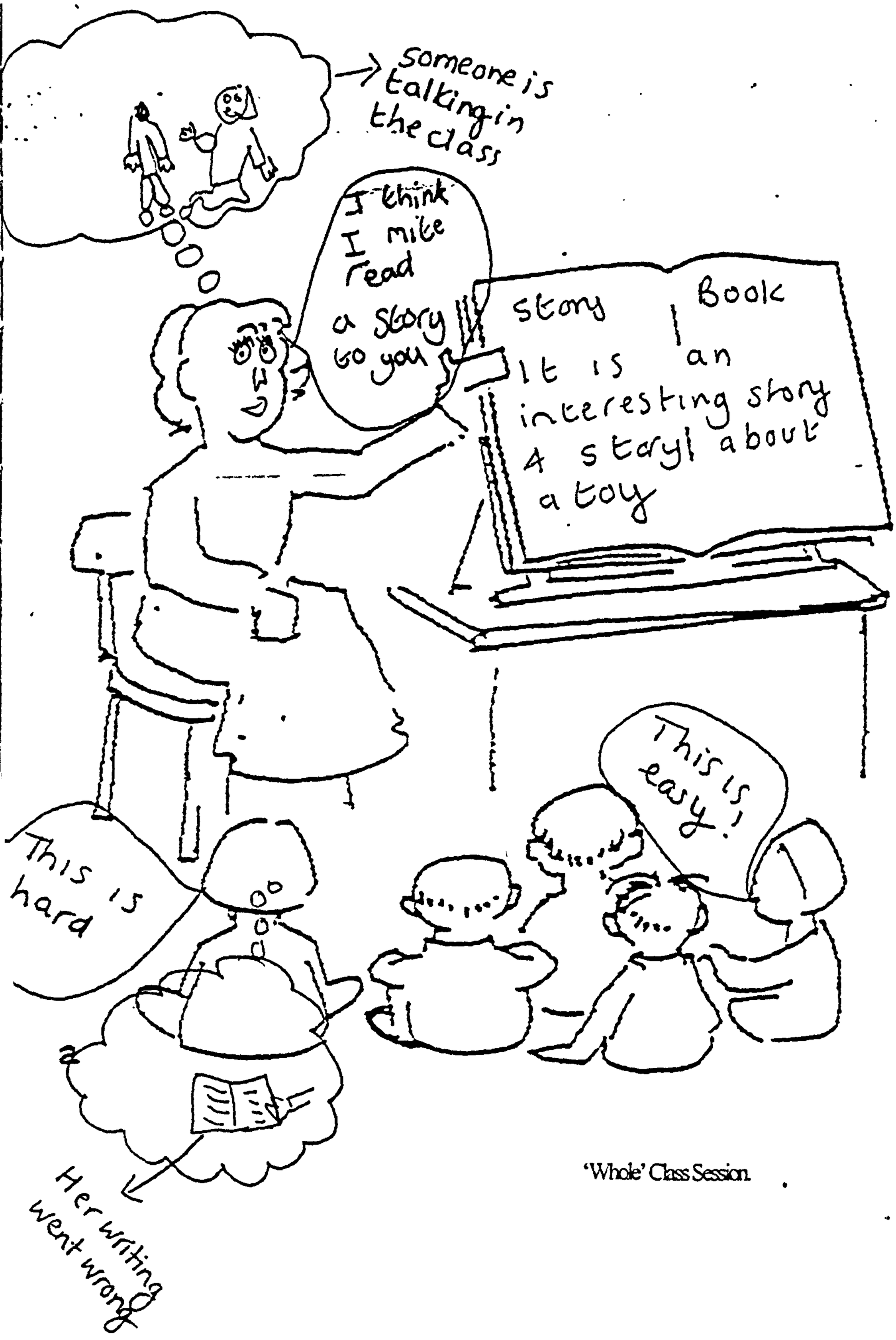
Encouraging caring, sharing interaction.

'Contribution' key word. Accepted – not an interruption.

Example 6:

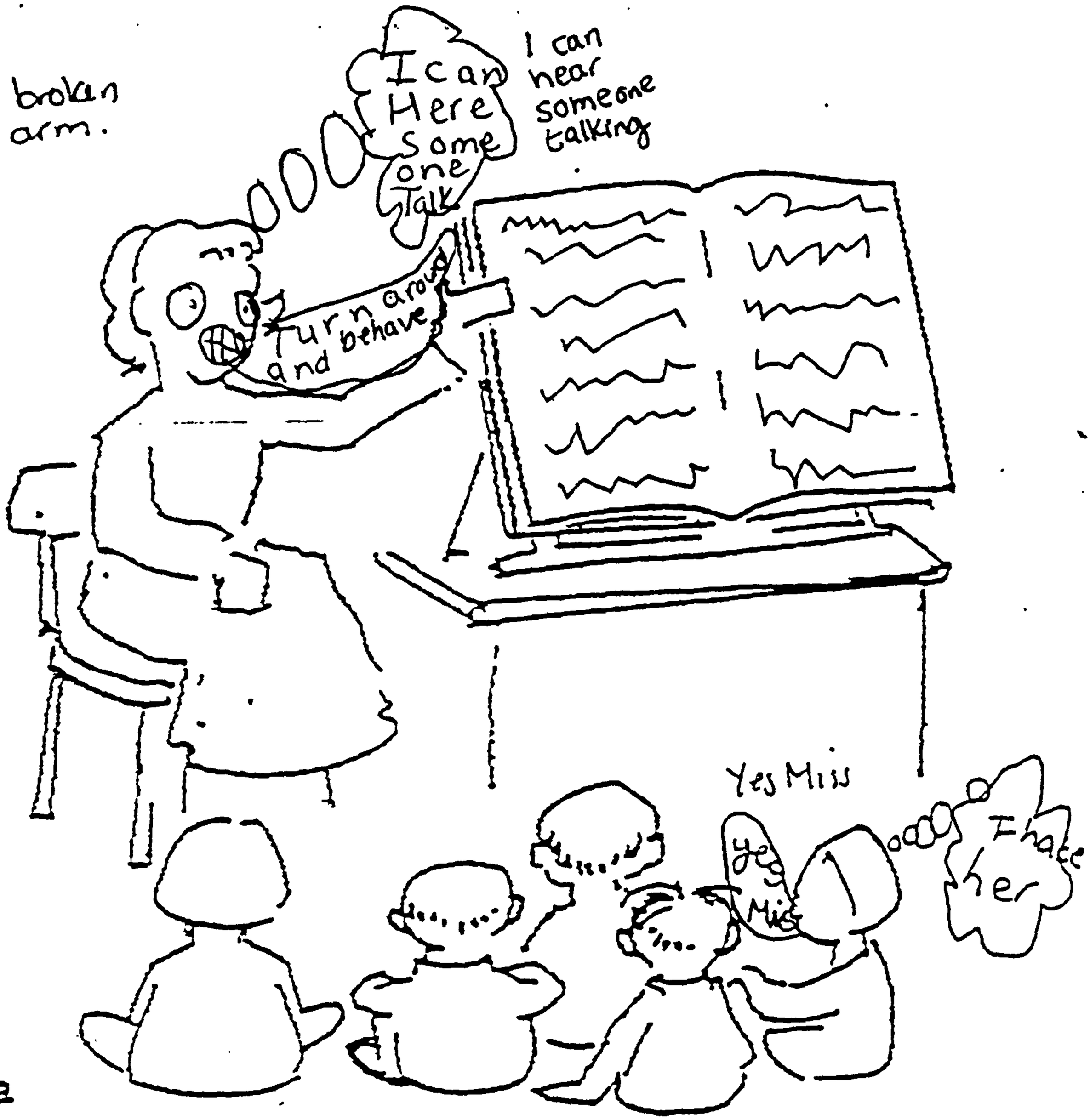
The following example is taken from a transcript at the end of the intervention. The study has come full circle. The target groups were video taped again by the non-participating researcher during the unsupervised time of the Literacy Hour. Pupils were set the task of presenting a set of Instructions which could be compared and contrasted with the earlier 'whole' class transcripts on Instructions, (Example 3).

R: Oh well done!	*(Cut).*
E: You open the lid and then carefully put some on…….	Scene to be juxtaposed with instructions in Show'n'Tell and 'whole' class Literacy Hour session. Two pupils coordinating thought/ action/language.
J: the tooth brush…	
E:…but not too much….	
J:….on the tooth brush	Pupil finishes sentences.
E:……..tooth brush but then um *(pause). (J does the movement)*	Sentences being modified. Pupil hesitates.
E: … gently shut the lid on the tube of tooth paste.	Pupil supports the other with movement.
J: Put it down.	Adds to dialogue.
E: Put the tooth paste back away in the cup board *(movement).* Then… *(J putting brush up to mouth)*	
E: Put a little bit of water on the tooth paste. Turn the tap off *(movement)* Um… *(J brushes)* O.K. get the brush and clean your teeth really carefully.	Again pupil supports the other with actions. Again pupil supports the other with actions.
J: Slowly make a …	
E: If your teeth are a bit yellowy try and brush them really good so that the yellow comes off and you've got sparkly teeth. And then rinse it off and spit it out in the sink.	Slow, deliberate thinking.
J: And then you've got to put the tooth paste away.	Joint nature of dialogue. Adult's voice?



'Whole' Class Session.

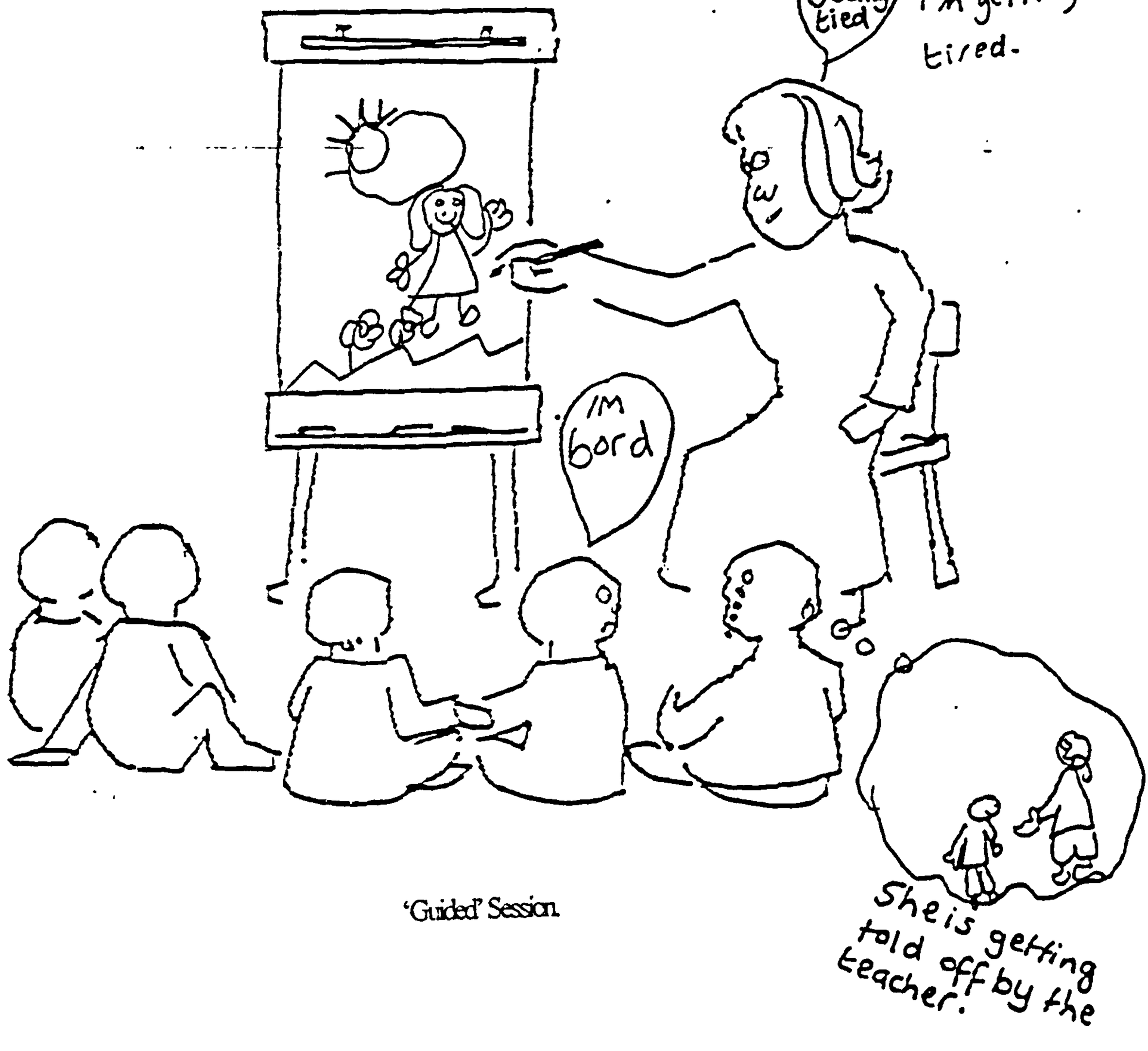
11 F: broken arm.



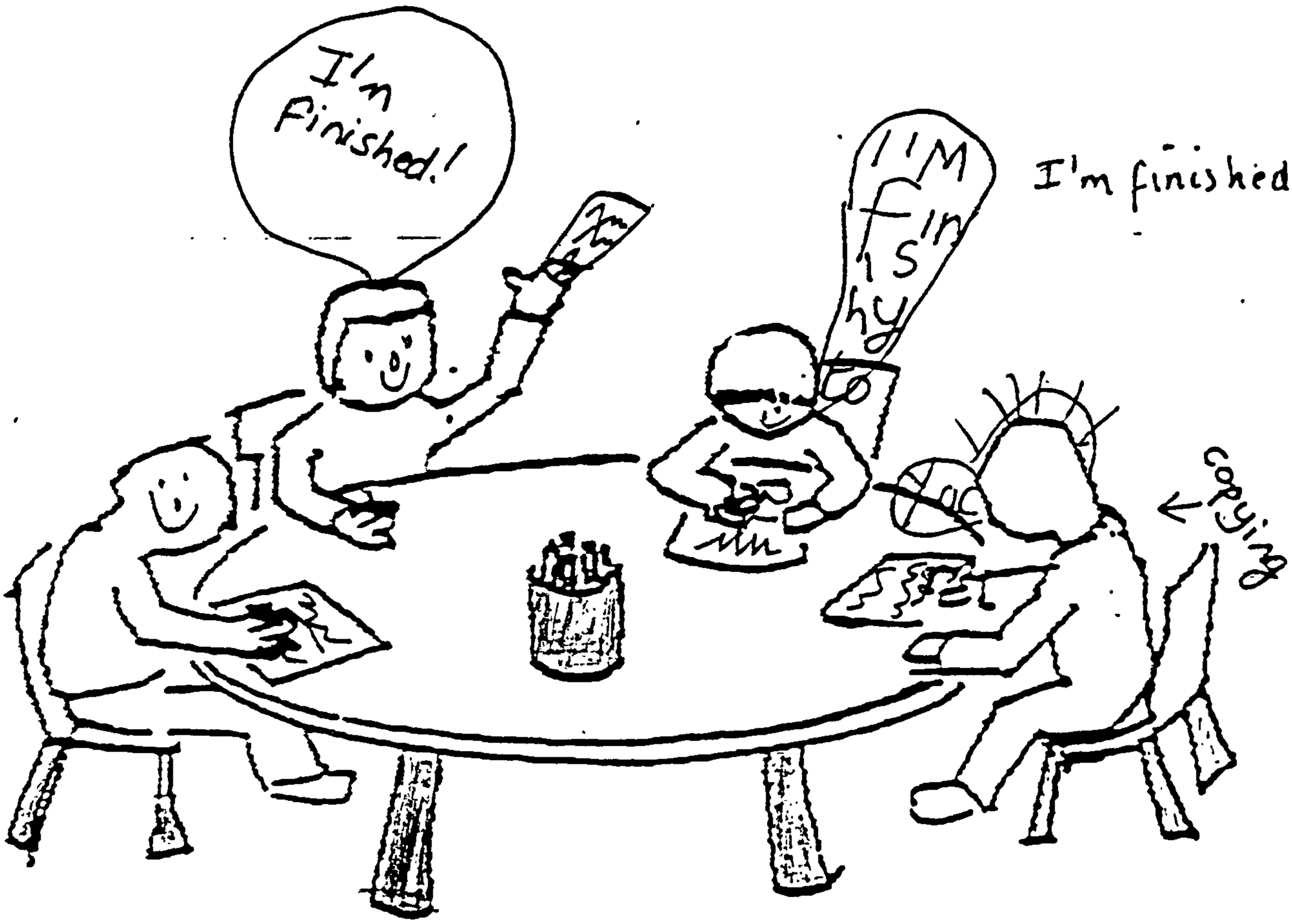
2

'Whole' Class Session

... . xxx

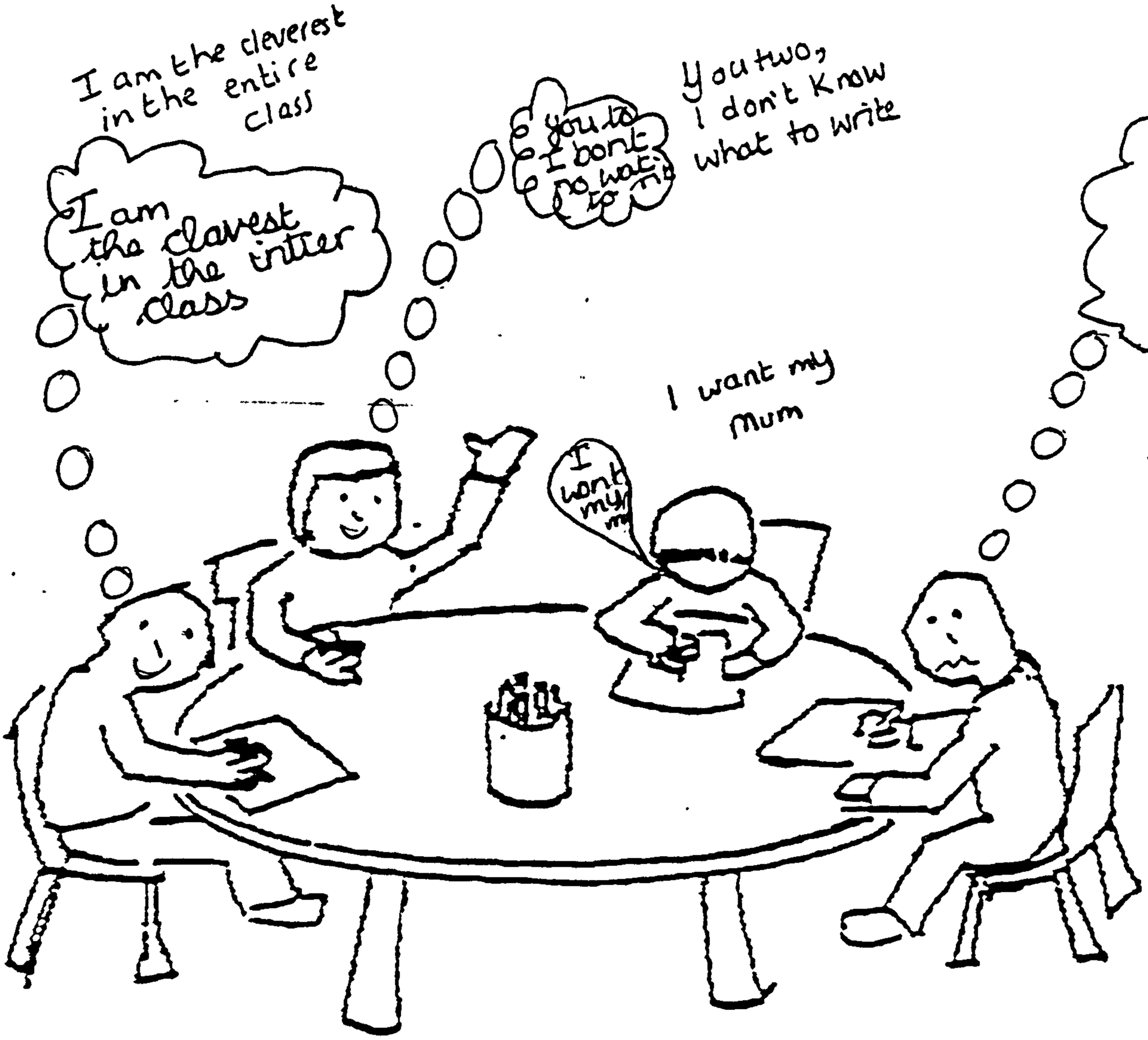


'Guided' Session.

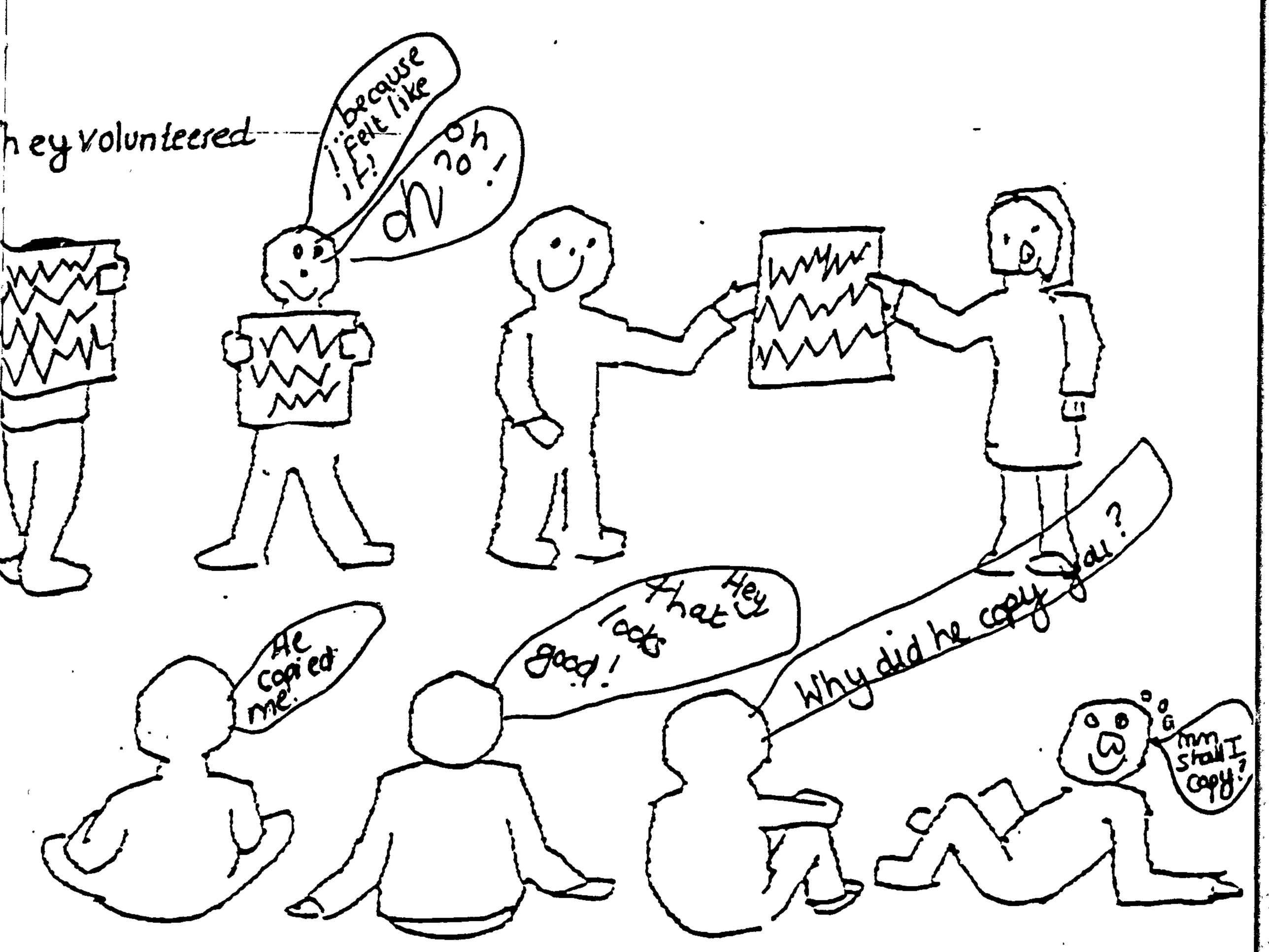


Pupil A.M:

"You can't give them the answers because it's copying".



Unsupervised Time.


hey volunteered
because I felt like it!
oh no!
He copied me.
Hey that looks good!
Why did he copy you?
mm shall I copy?

Plenary.


I think they like mine the most
I think it's brilliant
Class stop it!!
I think this is okay
Yawn! This is boring
Yeah!
That's quite good.
That's Wicked
Not very good

Plenary.